

SKYLARK IX

1980

SKYLARK IX

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Skylark Magazine, since its conception and premiere publication in 1972, has sought to offer notoriety to authors and artists from the Calumet Region. Owing to diligent staff members, generous school and community support and consistent patrons, **Skylark** has evolved into one of the finest university publications in the Midwest.

In this year's edition, I am honored to include a series of poems by Charles B. Tinkham, who in addition to faithfully serving as faculty advisor to **Skylark** for nine years, is now celebrating his twenty-fifth year of teaching.

To Charles I extend my deepest gratitude, and herewith wish to sincerely thank the staff and patrons of **Skylark IX**.

Lynn E. Paluga
Editor-in-Chief

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First Place:
Eric Balog—
“The Chinese Gardener”
p. 16

Second Place:
Adeodato Piazza Nicolai—
“Dante Visits the
Calumet Region” p. 45

Honorable Mention:
Lorna Erikson—
Untitled Poem
p. 54

Prose

First Place:
Voyle A. Glover—
“Goin’ to Texas”
p. 40

Second Place:
Jitska Frouka—
“The Refiner”
p. 11

Honorable Mention:
Steve Parkman—
“Lost Fleck”
p. 51

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First Place:
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Pen and Ink Rendering
p. 13

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Black & White Photograph
p. 24

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p. 52

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Warren Arnold

CURTAIN CALL

*Columns of light
pierced curtains this morning
and gilded the hall table,
where a ballet of dust
spun 'round a bowl of oranges.*

*Through the window, trees in winter apparel
stretched toward the bright stagelight above
while clutching the handrail horizon.*

*An orchestra of wind played a saraband
as the second hand on the hall clock
did its endless pirouette.*

*While morning's counterpoint increased its tempo,
the sun moved across your picture
beside an old Chinese puzzle on the mantel.*

*You were the prima ballerina,
and I hoped you would see my face too,
dimly outlined over the footlights
and know that I loved you
and had brought you roses again
to remind you of summer.*

JOHN BOLINGER

I KNEW YOU

*You spoke to me in a dream
and I knew you perfectly.
Your desires were as real as my own,
and our minds touched,
unrestrained,
on identical plateaus of awareness.
The minute distance between any two souls
was briefly gapped,
leaving us momentarily free of ourselves,
and at liberty to become one another.
We reached and made contact,
spoke, and were heard,
looked,
and discovered each other completely,
and we were unconcerned about being known,
or understood.
A state of fused consciousness alienated us from
everything but each other,
and when I awoke,
I knew where I had been,
and I sensed that you were still near.*

DENNIS MOLONTKUS

CHICORY

COLLISION

*The crash of a giant's cymbals
90 m.p.h. velocity,
exploding,
a shaking of earth,
a stillness of
snow falling,
death certificates
signed and
catalogued away,
Time, they say, goes on
forever,
yet who can question the
eternity of
a
day?*

BARBARA ANN BORUFF

*The chicory is not a striking plant
like birds of paradise,
or gardenias,
but its character surpasses beauty.
It is tough, its sap bitter;
its flowers, lovely at seven,
insignificant by noon,
revive and keep their beauty
to themselves—
but it is there,
saved for another day.
A linear, spare,
subtle lovliness,
pale blue, yet perfect blue;
each flower a gem, and,
like my love for you,
the roots run deep.*

ERIK BALOG

FOR PEDRO

*tired empty eyes
peering
through iron bars
exposing the shallowness of a smile
Lost in a hollow void of disillusion
Where the promises and dreams that never materialized
float about weightlessly.*

*It must be painful to drift to your past
and find no place to linger.*

You are old now—and you have aged graciously.

*I am amazed that in a world that has offered you so little
and taken so much
you cannot stop being kind.*

*Yes the world has overlooked you, old one,
but I shall not.*

*For your lack of bitterness indicates a wisdom that I hope
someday to acquire,
and your tenderness,
unscathed by disappointment, and unvengeful after gross
injustice
is a miracle beyond my comprehension.*

DENNIS MOLONTKUS

THE REFINER

The southern Minnesota highway meandered past rocky fields, reedy lakes and ravines lined with scrub oak and willow. It was early July and the roadsides and sloping valleys were ripe and dappled with patches of yellow sweet clover and purple alfalfa. But the tranquil setting was interrupted by a fiftyish couple who argued as their car traveled along the tarmac.

"Face it, Ida, she's a pig. They live in a pig sty. They live like animals."

Ida's lips thinned over her aging doll face. "Henry, you have no right to talk about my sister that way. Our family was refined. She's been beaten down, beaten down by that inhuman boor she married. It's his fault. Judd has turned her into a field hand. She has no time to keep house. She can't help herself."

"Maybe she doesn't want to," Henry murmured.

"What! Doesn't want to?!" Ida spat out the words with disdain. "You actually think she enjoys her life? Ha! There's another of your typical remarks. Sometimes you can be as inhuman as Judd."

"You only believe what you want to, Ida. Nobody has to be that dirty and live with all those cats."

"She's lonesome," Ida snapped. "For years she's suffered without any real human companionship—you certainly can't consider Judd human. But you don't care. You don't feel for people like I do."

"Oh, stop your yammering!" The car swerved toward the median. "Your sister and her husband are pigs. Every year you nag me into bringing them unwanted things you've decided they must have. I'm tired of it and so are they. This is the last time, Ida. Next year I'm going fishing."

"Fishing! All you ever think about is yourself and fishing. Is it asking too much to think of someone besides yourself for one week out of the year? Mattie needs us. All you ever think of is yourself. I've devoted my entire life to you. Who else works full time and still provides her husband with freshly squeezed orange juice? And you have the gall to want to go off alone, fishing!!"

"It's better than visiting that dump."

"It's not a dump. Anyone who understands antiques would consider it priceless. There's scroll work on the gables."

"Then it's a priceless antique dump."

"You're hard and vicious, Henry. And ungrateful. Someday you'll pay for it. If it wasn't for Mattie I wouldn't be where I am today—or you. Think of how easy you have it because I bring in a paycheck too. If Mattie hadn't paid . . ."

"Oh, shit. Here we go again." Henry began to mimic her in a sing-song voice. "Poor Mattie. Hired out during the Depression to work as kitchen help on an Indian reservation. Toiled from dawn to dusk among the pots in a steamy scullery with red and blistered hands. Slept with only a thin cover and hopsacked pillow case. Never a day off. Almost succumbed to diphtheria—but managed to pay part of your college tuition. Some thirty years later we're still supposed to toady up to her. We've paid her back a thousand times over. So stop your incessant complaining." The car swerved menacingly.

Ida did not give up easily. "No matter what I do, I'll never be able to repay her. We were a refined family. What have I ever done to change her pitiable existence?"

"Well, if you want to change her 'pitiable existence,' why not invite her over to our house," Henry teased. "You could clean her up and reform her. You could rescue her from Judd."

"No, Henry, that would not work. She'd never be accepted. We could never take her to church. They'd stare. She would feel out of place."

"She could come on the bus for a visit."

"She couldn't possibly travel. She wouldn't know what to do. She hasn't left that place in thirty years. She's vulnerable and naive. Some derelict at the bus station would probably attack her."

"If he could get past the smell."

"You're vicious, Henry. Someday you'll pay for it."

"And you're a meddler."

"It's for her own good. She needs it."

"It's her choice. No one has to live like that. Now shut up."

The directions were the same. Turn east by the windmill. They saw it almost immediately, desolate and rusting, like a forgotten tepee staggering toward the prairie horizon. Just beyond stood a ramshackle farm house with scroll work on its gables.

Judd knocked several times before the rust-eaten screen door scraped open.

"Come in. They're here, Judd."

Mattie extended a hand. Beaten down. Her fists were gnarled and thick, the nails cracked, and rimmed with crescents of dirt. Beaten down. Her work jeans were filthy slick, her hair flattened by grime. Her slouched and sexless breasts poked at a stained calico shirt as she hobbled toward the kitchen. From the ragged side of a tattered tennis shoe bulged two deformed toes. Wedged between them was a piece of dried cow dung. Beaten down . . .

Judd emerged rawboned and brutish. He squinted at them through bleary pig eyes. His bovine head wavered unsteadily. His body seemed unhealthy and shrunken from a once strapping frame. He slid a greasy finger under his rheumy nose and sniffed. "Howdy."

Nobody shook hands. Judd pointed to a kitchen chair for Ida.

She perched on the edge of it with refined, sorority composure. Legs crossed. Hands folded and resting demurely in her lap. She smiled brightly and said, "You have such fine antique scroll work on your gables."

"Thanks."

Conversation was forced. Ida stared past them and through the fly-specked window. Not at the dust curling along the linoleum. Not at the filth. Not at the junkyard litter. Not at the stuffing leaking out of the sofa. Not at the roaches scuttling under the refrigerator. Not at the sink heaped with piles of oozing garbage. And most of all, not at the cats.

Everywhere there were cats. Lounging on the refrigerator. Basking on the cast iron stove. Sipping out of the water dipper. Drinking out of the milk bucket with its crusty ring of dried yellow scum. Inside an open cupboard, curled on top of a stack of cracked dinner plates. Square dancing with each other. Sashaying around the rubbish. Weaving, bounding, leaping cats. Cats toying with roaches. Cats pouncing on roaches. Cats munching daintily on roaches. Cats smashing roaches with grim feline claws. Cats biting into brittle roach backs. Everywhere there were cats. Beaten down . . .

After so many years Henry was still appalled by the filth. Resentment steeped inside him. He hated Ida for forcing him here. He hated her meddling and he hated her contemptible relatives. Most of all he hated her incessant nagging. He leaned against the window ledge and brooded.

On the ledge outside, a little moth had become trapped in a spider's web. It struggled frantically, like a ferret caught in a snare. Quickly, the spider raced up the web to control her victim, lashing it down with guy lines of iron gossamer. Ruthless, relentless, manipulating, she spun. Like a deft tight rope walker, she gyrated excitedly, until another victim was left in storage, helplessly spinning, spinning in the wind.

The exchange of banalities strained to silence. Everyone was waiting. Ida arose and the ritual began. "We brought some things you might like. They're in the car. Henry, you'll have to help me unload."

Judd yawned.

Outside, Ida glanced up at the eaves. "Is that a hornet nest plastered to your house?"

"Yes."

"Well, Judd should take care of it. Judd, you should take a pole and knock that thing down and douse it in a bucket of gasoline. We could be attacked."

Mattie glanced warily at Judd. "No, Ida, they've lived here for years. They're no bother. There's room enough for all of us."

"I read an article in the *Reader's Digest* about hornets. Judd should take care of them. They're deadly."

Judd muttered something inaudible and glowered. Mattie's eyes pleaded with him.

Ida returned to the house and stepped into the parlor with a stack of boxes. She set them down and directed Henry who was shoving a dated hi-fi through the rubble.

Mattie watched them with tired eyes.

Ida began with an evangelistic smile. "Mattie, I found some things to spruce up your wardrobe."

Mattie sighed heavily. "A pant suit. Name brand, I'll bet." The tired eyes smiled, "It's blue as a robin's egg." She gamely peered past the tissue paper and into the next box. "My, what's this? Looks like a year's supply of nylon stockings." She paged through them with leathery fingers. "Nice shade you picked, Ida. 'Rose beige,' it says, 'like the Cleveland horizon just after starfall.' And a pair of dress boots with those fancy stacked up heels"—then joking—"stylish attire for an evening out in the barn. Bessie'll probably let down twice as much milk when she sees me strutting by in these."

"They weren't meant for barn work. And neither were you. We were a refined . . ."

Judd's jaw tightened. Mattie quickly distracted them both. "Well, will you look at this. A hi-fi." Her weathered hands twisted the tuner. Then she flipped through the dogeared jackets of the records. "With 'inspirational and easy listening music.' How generous, Ida. Bet it will rival our finest country song birds. And what's this?"

Ida was back again—hammering. "'Total Hair Care'—in case you'd like to touch up your hair. There's too much iron in your well water. Judd should install a water softener. Iron makes the ph content of your hair off balance. It can't possibly hold a curl that way. You should try this. Then soak your hair in vinegar. You'd be amazed at the result."

"I suppose I would."

"And here's a little pamphlet on the Fritter Diet. You should follow it. You'd feel better. Judd might even stop wheezing. You both need more fiber. It keeps your eyelids from looking puffy. And here's a box of alfalfa sprouts. They're an excellent source of potassium. They'd make your hair and skin sparkle. I eat them in salads all the time."

Mattie eyed sparkling Ida and replied gravely. "You'd better be careful of that, Ida. Too much alfalfa will bloat a cow."

Henry brightened. "Aha! That explains it."

"What?"

"The problems you've been having in the car. Too much alfalfa sprouts."

Judd snickered.

"Don't be crude, Henry. My digestive system's entirely different than a cow's."

The ritual ended when Judd was presented with a token bottle of after shave. He opened it and poured most of it over his

head. The pungent yellow liquid streaked his grimy face and dripped from his stubbled chin. He loosened his belt and dumped the remainder inside his pants. "Ah! Thanks, Ida. Just what I wanted. 'Essence of Eucalyptus.' Control yourself now, dear, and try not to attack me." The pig eyes leered. Mattie sighed and stood up. "Let's take a walk." Ida looked outside and whined, "Oh, no! I can't. It's going to rain. I just got a new tint treatment. My hair will be ruined."

The wind blew the rain over the house suddenly. A cauldron of gunmetal gray clouds rumbled overhead and rain tattooed their tin roof with a woodpecker staccato. The residue tumbled down the little corrugated troughs of the roof and spilled over its sagging gutters. It tore the little moth from the spider's web and sluiced downward. Down where the snake slept.

The rain stopped as suddenly as it had begun and everyone stepped outside. Henry saw it first. A rollercoaster of horror swept through him. It had slithered out of the water-logged hole and into striking distance. Riled. Sinuous. Then quickly coiling. Mouth flexed, fangs poised, tongue flickering. It measured him through cold, stiletto pupils. Then there was a buzzing in the grass, like a dud firecracker, and they turned.

Mattie said urgently, "Henry, don't move!"

"Woman, you better get that," ordered Judd.

"Are you crazy," hissed Ida. "Why can't you get it?"

"Because it's her relative that's about to get bit," Judd sneered. "Don't make no difference to me whether he does or doesn't." He spit and phlegmy tobacco juice grazed her stockings.

Ida reeled backward and screamed, "You swinish creep! We came here to help change your scummy existence and you . . ."

The snake buzzed.

Judd's fists tightened. A sinister glint lit his eyes. The snake buzzed again, but Mattie recognized something even more ominous as Judd moved toward Ida.

Quickly, she stepped between them and slapped Ida. Ida's smarting face rocked. Blood trickled in little rivulets over her front teeth and dribbled down her chin. Mattie looked at her bitterly, "You meddlesome bitch. You are as shallow as cow pie. You'll never understand. We don't change. We don't improve. We don't live—we endure. Now get the shovel from the barn."

Ida looked at her, stunned. She hesitated, then hurried off. She carried the shovel awkwardly; her frail shoulders arched around the scoop. Manure smeared her blouse. She stumbled and heaved it to Mattie.

The handle fit familiarly between the callouses of Mattie's hands. She lifted it slowly, darkly. Then down, and down, and down. She hammered away at the snake and the earth. At last it was over.

Henry stared, blank-eyed and pale. He walked woodenly to the car. They left immediately.

Ida sat dazed and silent. They turned past the windmill, stark and rigid against the gunmetal gray clouds. It struggled in the wind, battered, forgotten, unchanged. Ida gazed past it and murmured, "I just don't know. I just don't know. We were a refined family."

JITSKA FROUKA

*cool October's wood smoke
gave way to winter's gust
and there was nothing so wonderfully warm
as snuggling down in bed
ignoring winter's icy grip*

*i fell into a dream
of sunshine and flowers
and the woods in spring
and then
in the paradise of half sleep
i awoke
feeling warm as snow that has fallen
upon itself all night.*

LORNA ERICKSON

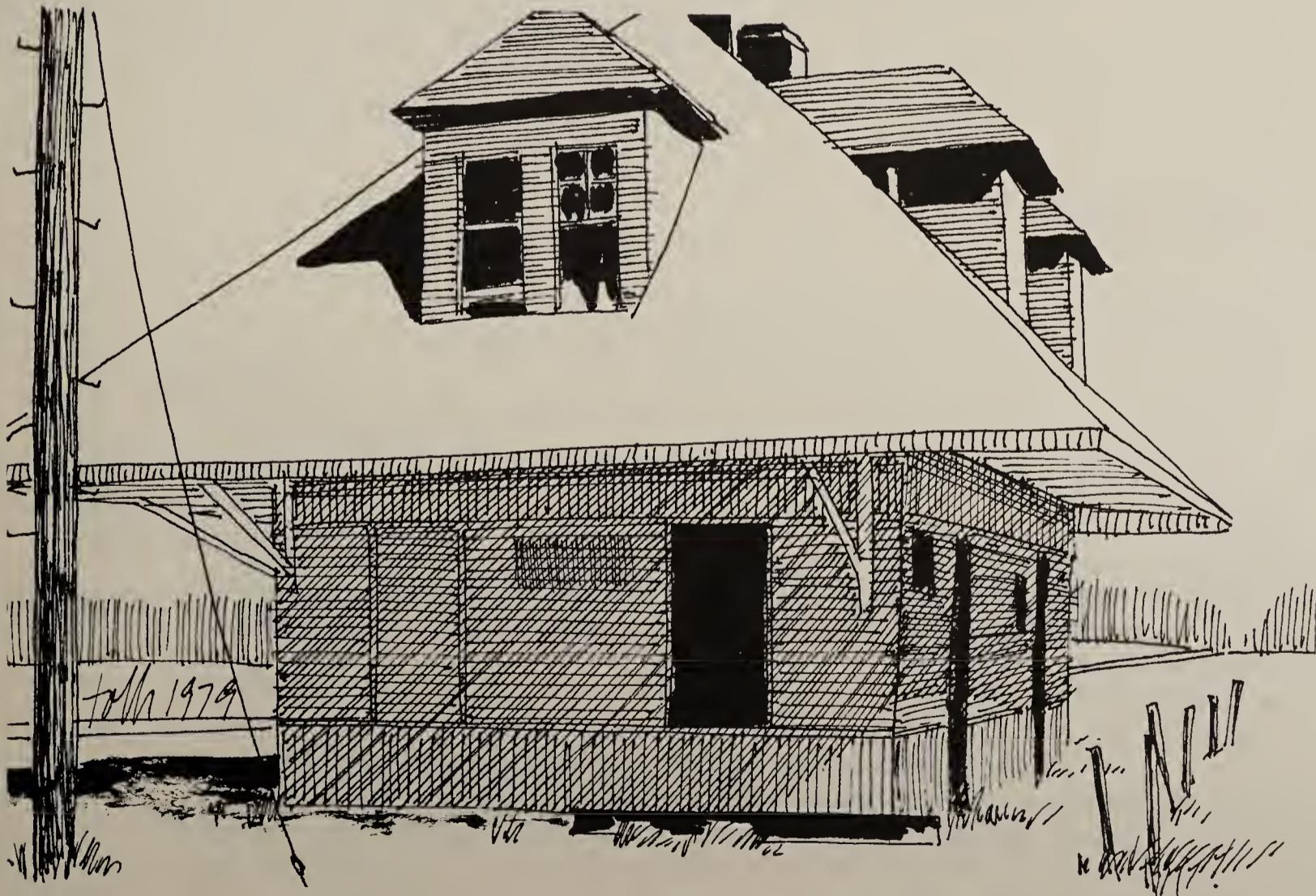
*who would not say that this is right?
that it is good to string words
like the jewelry stringing pearls
who would not say that there is much more
than gut feelings written on our faces?*

*the need to create runs deep
like ancient tree roots feeding underground
paralyzed in time
just like the words birthed before
and surely the ones that will follow*

*who would not say that writing
is better than flinging words to the sky*

for the wind to carry?

LORNA ERICKSON



Mark Toth

MIO PADRE

To gaze at a river made of time and water
and remember Time is another river.
—Jorge Luis Borges

*Life is the river unfolding to sea.
Few know the lust of the river;
few love the rage of the sea where
life is the river unwinding to sea.*

*Seasons are mouths of the river
who gasp for the sea-grope. And
so many fingers and so many lips
feed our obstinate drive for the sea*

*where summers are underneath caverns
provoking the wend of our rivers to sea
and so many seedlings, of dark-rooted trees,
grip the bends of its wave. Few know the sea.*

*Our autumns are kite-gliding leaves
(so many outstretch for the sea, wounded
by so many suns, moons and tempests
to fall) and few shall discover the sea*

*when spirals of snowflakes on waters
mark each winter's roll to the sea
and rage becomes love. Shall we then
recover the sea, when they become one?*

ADEODATO P. NICOLAI

EGO SUM . . .

*i am a syntactical enigma
in a subjunctive mood,
misplaced modifier,
split
infinitive,
dangling
construction,
a fragment,
without parallel construction;
i am a subordinate clause . . .
interrogative, past participle,
(o, to be future perfect!)
i long to be imperative,
indicative.*

*And when you peruse the oceans of prose,
looking for something memorable,
you will find me—
In that which your eye passes over.*

DREAM ON

*Don't let people belittle your dreams;
For dreams become thoughts and
Thoughts become things.*

EVELYN LAHAIE

BARBARA ANN BORUFF

A LOVE POEM

*I am a gate
that swings to
the breeze played
and with
the hinges provided.*

*I am a wind
holding a bird's wings
aloft in motionless
pursuit.*

*I am a time
of sun, flowering
between clouds.*

*I am a moment
remembered
after tears.*

MARILYN RIGGLE

SPRING'S AWAKENING

*The vibrant sun glistens overhead
Pointing its rays to touch the dead.
It brings back to life
Nature's petal—nature's leaf—
Newness blossoming from her bed.*

*Sleeping flowers awaken
Their eyelids look shaken
A gentle breeze encircles the land,*

*The trees and the grass
Feel the coolness wander past
A timely setting for the season at hand.*

*So push upward your delicate crown
Let birdsong resound
Budding beauty is taking its bow.*

TERRY WALKER

CHARACTER SKETCH

She was like a stone. Not at all like a stone that you just pick up and skim across the water, but a stone that has been tumbled over and over to wear away the roughness. After the roughness was worn away she was polished. Polished until she shined and glistened. She was not naturally beautiful. Her beauty was like that of an ordinary stone that has been worked and set to show its best qualities. Underneath the polish and the setting, she was just as cold and unfeeling as a stone. When you knew her and became aware of the coldness you wondered why she was so cold. She couldn't have always been that way. But when you compared her to the stone it made sense. All that tumbling and polishing to change her from her original state had left her scarred and hurt inside. And no one could ever touch her. They could admire the smooth polished exterior, and she even allowed someone to stroke her occasionally. But, not really touch the inside. It was just superficial and one wondered at the sadness of it all. What turns people to stones?

LINDA LEAMAN

THE CHINESE GARDENER

*The Chinese gardener planted beds of flowers
and trimmed the hedges, pruned trees
with but one thought in mind: the fitness of design
into his universe.
When he cut flowers or branches in the spring, he chose
one or three or nine —
his universe did not depend on pairs.
He grouped his flowers and shrubs and even stones by
fitness, not by size or symmetry: parity did not exist.*

*The house near which these gardens grew was old
and made of heavy quarried stone.
Two bays of windows flanked the massive doors,
a central foyer led to rooms to left and right,
a double staircase, each side having twenty newels,
led to rooms above.
The maid (the gardener's wife) arranged the flowers, dusted
the portraits gathered two by two along the walls.
Their son, on scholarship at MIT, read laws
his father smilingly observed and then ignored,
and sensed a problem: "Everything," it said, "must have an
opposite. The world consists of pairs."
He did not tell his father, but he walked on curving paths
and gazed at flowers till he understood.
He knew his father and celestial generations
who had taught and lived in a-symmetric life
could not be wrong.
His path was clear. He learned both ways, observed and
checked his data; checked again.
And then one year he proved, with stunning elegance,
that there are particles or atoms which exist
along, without left-handed counterparts.
His father, planting roses that day, merely smiled.*

ERIK BALOG

HAIKU

*Rain brings the flowers
and they display their beauty
like a child at play.*

*Leaves make no judgments
in accepting their color
men could do the same.*

DARLENE GIBBONS

The Summer of a Garage Sale Tent and a Jar of Peanut Butter

I have always hated springtime in the suburbs. It is a time when free spirits should romp, but instead everything is so nailed down. Daffodils and tulips emerge in precise rows. Budding trees are pruned, and when the grass greens and thickens, it is groomed and edged to the perfection of a synthetic, pile rug. Plastic ground sheets and monotonous, walnut-sized rocks smother the dirt around evergreens to stifle weeds. Fruit trees are merely decorative and generally of the dwarfed variety. Hybrid geraniums inevitably border contrived shrubbery arrangements and flowers are limited to functioning as ornaments. They are never picked for bouquets.

It is a world where kites always get caught on high tension wires, where treehouses are torn down because they violate the city building codes, and where dandelions silently choke on pesticides.

Summer is even worse. As soon as the children are out of school I begin to feel like Peter Rabbit's mother who is forced to contend with keeping her young out of Mr. McGregor's garden. People with manicured yards usually despise footballs, sandboxes, squeaky tricycles, soccer games, sticky jelly faces, and all children who holler above a whisper.

We live in a ticky tacky suburb sandwiched between the belching Gary steel mills and the concrete mazes leading into Chicago. My husband's occupation is extremely demanding in the summer so vacations are rare and the major responsibility of managing our four children rests with me. One morning in late spring, as the neighbor next door was sharing her secrets of oven cleaning with me, and the one across the street was hollering at the children for hitting a baseball through his basement window, it occurred to me that there could be more to life than Highland, Indiana. But unless something drastic happened, it appeared that we were doomed to enduring another predictable summer of suburban mindlessness. Once again, I began to dream of a way to escape. A few weeks later the children discovered one.

In our area, every Thursday is like Christmas because it is garage sale day. If the children have been helpful and cooperative during the preceding week, I usually give them each a quarter. Giving kids a quarter for a garage sale is practically as good as extending them unlimited credit on Wall Street. Their buying power is incredible and they never fail to dance home with some magnificent, unimagined treasure: crutches, formals, gerbils, wigs, jewelry, microscopes, pocket knives, cameras, handcuffs, puppies—the possibilities are endless—yes, even a tent! An immaculate, spotless, flawless, typically suburban, Lysol fumigated tent.

The owner wanted many quarters for it. We pooled our resources and I offered her all the money we had, which still was not enough, but I knew she would take it. She was anxious to unload that tent for a far more sophisticated shelter, equipped with a microwave, color TV and a virtually limitless holding tank. The children thought a tent would be ideal to play with in the back yard, but I had other plans for it.

When we went to the library later that day, I headed for the travel section. It did not take long for me to decide where I would like to go. It was only late spring, but I was already weary of boundaries, blaring radios, yapping poodles, freshly waxed station wagons, the region's single lake stenched with alewives, and streams used exclusively to convey industrial wastes. The children were growing up too quickly and they had never seen a waterfall larger than Buckingham Fountain or a mountain higher than the slag heaps outside the mills. The horizon was that vague area somewhere beyond buildings, telephone poles and

power lines that the sun sunk into every night. The way I saw it there was only one place to go—the Pacific Northwest.

I had already spent several summers wishing our family could travel west, but all hopes were immediately squelched because my husband was too busy in the summer months to take us. But this summer I began to think about widows, servicemen's wives, divorcees'—women who manage families alone. I also had been intrigued by Naomi Uemura, who after a treacherous, solo trip, had recently arrived at the north pole. Although the children and I had never traveled farther than Brookfield Zoo, if Uemura could reach the top of the world in a dog sled, we certainly could cross our country in an air-conditioned station wagon.

Another problem was limited finances. We are ordinary people of middle class income. To be catered to with vibrating mattresses, toilets with paper seals across the seats, and sumptuous dining experiences would rapidly confine my wonderlust merely to frustrated dreams. Although we had camped only a few times, with borrowed equipment, the children's garage sale tent seemed the logical solution. Thousands of people camp. We could too.

It took us one day to pack the groceries, clothes, and camping equipment. But to preserve everyone's sanity while traveling, I spent the next three days concocting surprises to occupy their time. Some primal, motherly instinct told me I would not be tooling around the countryside, flanked by four brightly beaming faces, content to do nothing but gaze with rapture upon every bucolic scene we passed.

Before we left, I explained to the children that our adventure would be no luxury trip and that I hoped to show them a world they had never seen before. But it would have to be with our garage sale tent and a jar of peanut butter.

When we awoke the next morning, I fervently hoped the wheels would wobble off before we started. I was so afraid. The children echoed my thoughts, warily.

"What if we get sick or hurt?"

"What if we are far away and the car breaks down?"

"What if a snake or bear gets in our tent?"

"What if some wicked fiend finds us?"

I forced myself to rationalize. "There are doctors who exist outside of Highland. There is no worse place for a car to break down than on one of the heavily traveled city expressways a few miles from home. Snakes and bears do not usually go inside tents, and there are more wicked fiends prowling the city than campgrounds."

Apprehensively, I eased the car out of the driveway, away from the comfort and warmth of a husband I love. The children waved good-bye to him regretfully, but as I turned, I saw four pairs of eyes filled with cautious excitement and fanciful visions of the future.

And so it began. Deliberately, I pushed the accelerator down as we went out to travel a road that I had dreamed of following for years. I was not sure what it would lead to. If nothing else, I hoped that it would combat suburban drudgery and that we would return safely.

We reached Wisconsin the first night. After driving, setting up camp, cooking, and cleaning up, it seemed possible the suburbs had certain advantages I had overlooked. The children happily cavorted along woodland trails until one of them caught a snake which promptly whirled around and bit his hand. Dramatically, blood ran down over his fingers. Breathless, terrified couriers of doom raced toward camp.

"A snake bit Mark!"

"Somebody better suck the poison out!"

"Look! All of his blood is leaking out!"

"He'll probably die."

It was only a superficial wound, but the children were sufficiently awed to accord him hero status forever. Months later I would hear, "See him walking down the street? You'd never know it by looking at him, but he survived a vicious snake bite in the woods of Wisconsin."

They finally fell asleep scratching rashy, spreading patches of poison ivy, and debating.

"Is it true that if you sit in the outhouse too long you'll go blind?"

"I don't think so."

"It seems like it."

I slept fitfully that first night. One of the most difficult things for me to adjust to was to be at ease outdoors during the night. In town where only weirdos walk out alone at night, I had grown accustomed to the familiar suburban, insulated night noises—the air conditioner whirred, refrigerator hummed, sump pump sloshed, clock donged, and cars whooshed back and forth. But suddenly, we were ambushed by startling flutters, crackles, croaks, howls, and hoots. In between, the stillness lay heavy and suspenseful. Sounds, and even the quiet, seemed to be amplified by the night air. I told myself people all over the world sleep outside at night and survive. We will too.

In the weeks to come, I grew accustomed to the untamed noises of the night. Played out as a woodland lullaby, their simple sounds reverberated more harmoniously than the most intricate symphony. I basked in the luxury of listening to it as I watched our drowsy children slip off to a contented slumber. It was a time of tenderness and tranquility. It was restful to the soul.

During the following days we crossed the northern prairies of our country. Cluttered cities and odorous oil refineries receded into easily forgotten illusions. For hundreds of miles, soft, western winds wafted nothing but the cleansing fragrance of freshly mown hay. At times, when we reached the apex of a sweeping, gentle rise, it seemed as if we would drop off the lip of the world, but there was always a road down. The highway, like a gigantic zipper, divided the grasslands and ribboned into the bluffs, sagebrush, and craggy canyons of eastern Montana. We had entered the "big sky country."

The following day the windows of the western world opened up to us and we climbed through. We topped one final rise and then with an exhilarating, triumphant whoop, we heralded the Rocky Mountains.

We had entered the land of sunburned faces and flannel shirts, where jeans had always been in style. It is the country where restless, western winds gallop over fertile mountain meadows, and where common, yellow butterflies dance to the world's most graceful ballet from wildflower to wildflower.

In the weeks to come every day held some new adventure. We saw a tawny doe with lush udders amble through a shallow creek bed and listened to the high pitched whistle of a hoary marmot as he scrambled over shale and beargrass. Our necks

craned to look up where rimrocks bit into the zephyr washed sky and eagles screamed voraciously. One morning, after a grueling climb, we kneeled to touch the fragile, purple petals and yellow center of a mountain columbine, somehow rooted in limestone.

We camped on a ranch where there were bats in the outhouse, a cat that packed mutilated mice in various stages of decomposition under our tent, and a snake that menacingly wrapped himself around my leg when I accidentally stepped on him while hiking in the long grass. I realized then why cowboys wear boots. But there were beavers in the reservoir to swim with. And there were spotted fawns that lay tight in the grass while their limber parents bounded across canyons and over hillsides, happily saluting us good-bye with the flash of a white tail.

Almost eight weeks and over six thousand miles later we regretfully headed home. Our trip was not merely an escape from drudgery. More important, it became a time of growing; for we experienced a richness of kindred spirits and respect for the land that runs as deep as the boundless western landscape. It came from our American people. Although we initially took the tent to economize, it furnished us with an invaluable key to meeting unique individuals we would never have encountered by sitting in a hotel room or a motor home. By pitching our tent near solitary camp fires, we visited with cowboys and ranchers, a forest ranger who was responsible for locating and mapping abandoned logging trails, a registrar at Berkeley who described herself as a "political animal," and a school teacher from Florida who had recently thrown his wife's ashes over the side of a favorite mountain. Somehow talking with them surpassed chatting with the Avon lady.

There were times when I was bone weary and forced to be patient far beyond normal endurance, but I never did anything any ordinary woman could not do. It does not take a windmill charging feminist to conquer new worlds.

Toward dusk on the final day, as we approached Chicago, the brakes began to grind. We were famished—forty miles from home. I stopped at McDonald's and purchased two hamburgers and a large bag of french fries which we divided, keeping two dimes for a phone call.

And so we drove home through the city night that coats the stars with grime, home on the asphalt expressways with cars surging forth like millions of rats pouring through a gigantic maze. Home at last to clean sheets, a hot shower, and a happy husband. Home with twenty cents in my pocket and four sleepy kids who could dream—dream of slaking their thirst from glacial waterfalls. Dream of climbing the foothills stacked up next to mountains; of lying among the Indian paintbrush and watching stars emerge to freckle a horizon stretched out to infinity. Dream of a land with people who have a depth of character to rival its natural beauty. Dream—and know it was real.

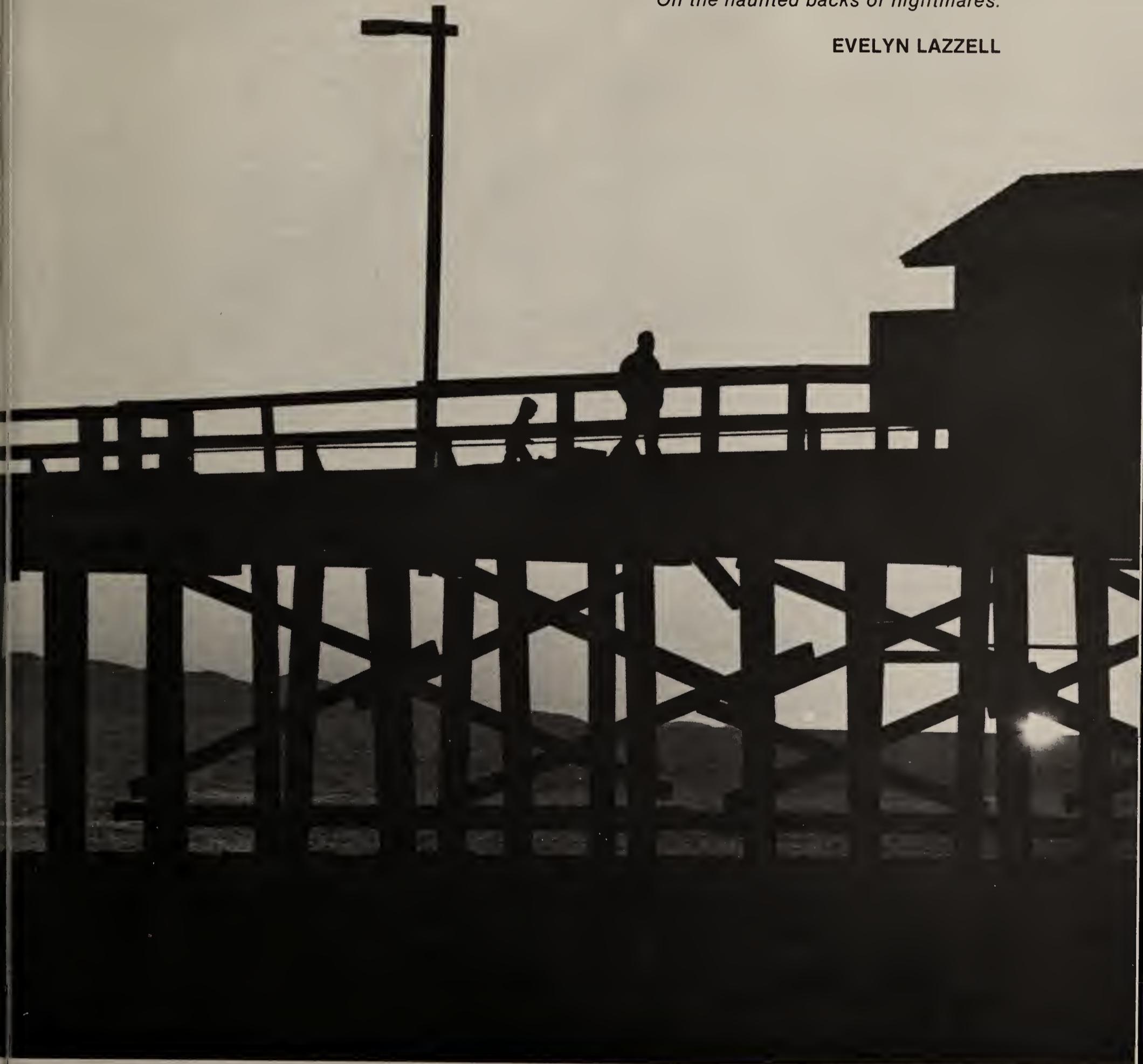
JAN SWART

THE TRUTH

*God is a concept.
Man is an apparition.
There is no co-relation,
Yet we strive to co-exist.*

*Death is the completion of Life.
Life is the awareness of Death.
The pain rides dimly
On the haunted backs of nightmares.*

EVELYN LAZZELL



Deb Jonaitis

A FIELD OF VISION

*In Winter
Trees lean closer together
Huddled for warmth
Like old men on park benches.*

*Bare branches
touch and scrape
As if feeling for another's
Leaves, long fallen.
The bare, bleak line
Of sky and earth
Meets and holds
Frozen the vision.*

*A field of snow
Broken by fence posts
So neighbors will know
Which snow is theirs.*

JEAN OLDS

HAWK'S TOUCH

*From under its nest, high in the oak,
That clings to the crag by the waterfall
I watch at a great distance
A lone hawk glide in steady circles.
With intrepid readiness its savage eyes
Scan the slope of a stubble hill.
Below, this wild God of the world spots its prey
And cries, "I reap the grass in the dive."*

*It is not the swoop, the surprise,
The shadow the size of a hawk an inch away
That I see.
It is not the terror, the struggle,
The steel-trap talons snapping the neck
That I feel.
It is not the shudder, the shriek,
The final gasp of the crushed field mouse
That I hear.*

*It is the soaring strength, the freedom,
the still-winged sailing below the clouds
that fascinates me.
It is the fierce upward flight to the high country
The traversing of forests and streams
That inspires me.
It is the cry of the hawk on return;
The truth 'I have come home to myself'
That touches me.*

STEVE PARKMAN

A Matter of Perspective

When he entered the psychiatric ward, or "enchanted forest", as it is known among the hospital staff, he seemed to be just another poor soul swallowed up by his own psychosis. . . . except for his eyes. They were a unique metallic blue and lacked the hollow glassiness so evident in all of the mental patients at Saxon General.

As the orderlies led him in, each taking one arm, he gazed curiously around the rec room, studying his new surroundings and the non-descript faces held within. He followed the two brutish orderlies passively, as they beckoned him to sit in the easy chair in front of my desk. I wondered if my discomfort was as obvious as it felt when our eyes met. He had a way of staring at your soul, and for the first time in seven years at Saxon, I had the disconcerting sensation that our roles had somehow been reversed and it was indeed I who was being observed! So immobilizing was this feeling that it was he who finally took the initiative in beginning the interview.

"I am Ra-del," he said straightforwardly, "And I would like to know why I have been brought here." There was nothing menacing in his tone, but his voice had a strange, fragmented quality, reminiscent of somebody struggling with an unfamiliar language. Yet there was no trace of any accent.

I rose clumsily and extended my hand, a gesture that seemed to puzzle him, and when he made no effort to take my proffered hand, I pulled it back, and finally regaining some semblance of composure managed to stammer, "I'm Dr. Mallory, head psychiatrist at Saxon, and if I can find your file perhaps we can shed some light on that question." I was intensely aware of my uneasiness as I fumbled through the small mountain of paperwork that always graced my desktop, and having him lift the folder off of the corner of my desk, right where the attendant had left it, and hand it to me, did little to lesson my embarrassment. I pulled the commitment order out of the file, and he sat, arms crossed, and stared fixedly, while I perused the report stating the events leading up to his being taken into custody. . . .

"When observed by officers," the report stated, "subject was looking in the window of Sweeney's Tap and pressing buttons on what appeared to be a pocket calculator. The officers claim that when they approached him the aforementioned gadget was somehow disposed of by the subject and they were unable to retrieve it in the immediate area. When confronted, he identified himself as Ra-del and claimed to be an extra-terrestrial tourist, and also stated that he was filing information about our planet. It was at this point that the officers began to doubt his mental stability and decided to detain him for observation. The subject offered no resistance and was booked and handed over to Saxon General Hospital; Psychiatric Division." I set the report back down on my desk and sat, chin in hands, considering my words carefully before speaking.

"Well Mr. Ra-del, this is a highly unusual situation." I immediately reddened, because the Mr. I had added to the front of his name sounded so absurd to me—I was simultaneously feeling silly for buckling under his steady gaze, and for the little voice inside of me that was saying to cast aside my professional judgment and believe his incredible story. Professionalism barely won out! I gathered my faculties into an objective stance and prepared to carry on with the interview.

"When you say unusual, do you mean that you don't get many interplanetary visitors?" he asked.

"To the best of my knowledge we have **never** had one," I stated coolly.

"I'm afraid you're wrong about that," declared Ra-del. "I was told of this place by two travelers who had just left here. They said it was the strangest, most primitive world they had ever visited."

"And you?" I asked. "What is your impression of our fair planet?" A kind of clinical tolerance had returned to my voice, and I encouraged him to go on, much in the manner one would encourage an over-imaginative child to continue with some fantasy his impressionable young mind had convinced him he had really experienced.

"I have to agree with them," he answered bluntly. "Everything is so dirty! Your methods of transportation are archaic, and the people seem hopelessly caught up in meaningless ceremony."

I felt an impulse to leap to the defense of my fellow human beings but quickly realized that to do so would only lend him credibility, so I abruptly changed the subject. "By the way," I inquired, "what planet are you from?" I was disappointed to see no hesitancy in his reply.

"You could say I am a planet onto myself. To break it down to terms you could grasp would be impossible. Your language lacks the depth to translate the nature of my existence or origins. Let it suffice to say that in this time frame I belong here. It couldn't be otherwise. When it is no longer appropriate I will be gone."

I chose my words cautiously, trying unsuccessfully to conceal my indignation at being spoken down to. "Your answer is ambiguous at best," I remarked, "and it is I who decides the appropriate time for people to leave here."

Ra-del seemed amused by my attempt to display my authority. He studied my face for a moment, and his eyes twinkled as if to announced his next comment. "I wish that I were able to make my intentions clearer to you, Dr. Mallory. But I remain here for now, as it is necessary. It is not my wish to confuse or insult you with my explanations." With that, he rose, strode out of the office, and into the rec room.

I spent the rest of the day just observing Ra-del's interactions with the other patients. He accepted the "new guy" role quite graciously, answering their questions, and listening politely as each in turn explained his or her particular malfunction. Even Mrs. Pinkum—who had not uttered a word in three years—seemed taken by Ra-del. She watched intently as he moved easily through the room, and even smiled widely when Ra-del noticed her interest and introduced himself.

"She don't speak to no one," said Mr. Cosgrove, who had been in Saxon General since 1963 when he burned down an entire apartment complex to find out which flat his wife's lover occupied. "I even caught her bed on fire one night, just to get a rise out of her. Burned both her legs up and she never made a sound!"

That was unfortunately true. Old Cosgrove had always been fascinated by the hysterical effects of fire on even the most stoic of people. If he failed at getting your attention any other way he would set you ablaze while you slept. He seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of matches, and no matter how often we

frisked him, he always had a light when he needed one. While Cosgrove talked, Ra-del just nodded his head and focused his eyes on Mrs. Pinkum. By the time I got ready to go home, Ra-del was the talk of the ward. They had no problem believing his story, and none doubted that they were seeing history being made.

On the way home, I couldn't clear my head of the day's events. There was something distinctly different about Ra-del. . . . Something not of this world. As a seasoned psychiatrist, I am normally unintimidated by the outrageous claims by disturbed patients. As a matter of fact, I've always prided myself in my ability to remain unmoved by the irrational behavior of people under my care. Yet there I was, totally taken with the story of an obvious lunatic. I somehow felt like my professional integrity was threatened by this newcomer to my safe little world. I was preoccupied with Ra-del all evening, and after a fitful and unrelaxing sleep, I promised myself I would get to the bottom of the whole tawdry affair.

When I entered my office, old Mr. Cosgrove was waiting for me. On his lap he clutched a shoebox which he handed to me silently, and walked out of the room. I was dumbfounded when I discovered its contents several butane lighters, and an assortment of matchbooks. What appeared to be his entire cache of flame makers! Instantly I thought of Ra-del and wondered if he was connected to Mr. Cosgrove's mysterious behavior. Determined to investigate, I walked into the ward and searched from room to room for our strange new guest. There was no sign of him anywhere. The orderlies reported that he was there for the last bedcheck, but no one recalled seeing him at breakfast.

After one last frantic search of the ward I plopped down in my chair, and pondered Ra-del's curious disappearance. I was so engrossed in thought that I barely heard the rap on my office door. I raised my head just as Mrs. Pinkum entered, smiling serenely, and before I could speak, she did. "Good morning, Dr. Mallory. Ra-del had to leave, but he did ask me to give you this message." I was hypnotized by the squeaky, uneven voice emitting from the always silent Mrs. Pinkum. "Ra-del said to tell you that if one can gain the proper insights, all forms of life are quite easy to understand . . . it's all a matter of perspective."

JIMM WHITE

GOING HOME

*I sometimes dream of a faraway place
where all is peaceful
all is serene.
Where I can find only friends
or enemies since then
converted.
I sometimes see a beautiful garden,
blooming flowers
and butterflies everywhere.
Where only lovers,
intent upon themselves
are allowed to roam.
I sometimes feel this place I see
is little more than
a dream.
Where all my visions of humanity,
peace and serenity
can come true.
I sometimes think I'll never reach this haven,
smell the flowers,
or sit under the sun-kissed sky;
Where only the purest of air stirs the leaves
of the passion fruit tree
of home.*

LISA SPUDIC

I turned

*and your eyes met mine
and my heart knew
it had found
the playmate
so often longed for
so often missed
so often gone.*

I walked,

*you followed me
and our hearts
reached out
and in touching
two friends reunited after
an age of searching;*

two flowers

*bloomed and spread
petals o'er the ground
fertilizing it for future
hearts to meet
and lay themselves
bare
to the truth
of souls.*

LISA SPUDIC

ALL THE REALITY

*Reading those words,
it did something to me.
They were fresh,
visible,
real.*

*I touched them,
they touched back.*

*We soared,
we became,
we were.*

*Their purple tones tapped at my brain,
till I yearned for them,
cared for them,
as they cared for me.*

*We sat together at the fireside and shared in its mystery,
together.*

*Sweet words,
all that you have taught me,
through your rhymes,
I have learned.*

*Reflected thoughts and images
Run a dizzy pattern through my mind
Old faces and new
Are beginning to fade in and out of my consciousness.
Slowly but surely
I'm depending on mirages to keep me going.
The reality that I knew
Is fading away into dusty corners.*

CHRISTINA RAINFORD

YVONNE WILSON



E. J. Korba

Poems by Charles B. Tinkham

*in this quietness
old by ancient
to the depth
of this ravine,
we walk
beneath birch and fir
leaning precipitous
through ledges and years
old before our birth.
there is chill here
and a damp
and a trickle
of sunlight at our feet
and a shadow
under a rock*

*and we walk unknown
into a spirit world.
the soul of Cherokee
crouches and waits
tense as the prayer
of bowstring
in the rift
of sandstone and lime;
as on the stealthy jaw
of mastodon
a water spider pauses
for its moment
from eternity:
in the axe cleft
made by the golden God
all things have come
to rest*

*and we walk unknown
and backward into time*

EMMETT KELLY

*On his way out
to dump his garbage
in the land of flowers
he collapsed*

*curious—
we'll never know
if he went
weeping—or
laughing—*

*lakes
as blue as ice
glow
in silver sun*

*woods tell
the still green
secrets
of their leaves*

*white pines
drift slow
through blue skies
of August*

*the cricket
sings low
in a dusk
of grasses*

*rain steps
light
across the floor
of evening*

*one by glowing one
the stars appear*

*maybe for a joke
that Willie knew about
someone just
swept him
out of the spotlight
with a huge, gentle broom*

*he's back
in the green room now—
resting
between acts*

DANDELION

*little leaf
of gold
smithed
by the sun—
glowing in the eye
with miracle
of sudden April:*

*we say 'weed,'
but even words exhaust themselves,
fall silent to the wayside,
leave us defenseless
face to intimate face
with value beyond ourselves:*

*that root in us
attaches us to all,
binds us in any session
to the richness of being,
of loving with courage
whatever is stemmed
magnificent
from any cell
of the earth*

SEVEN WAYS OF HAVING

*a wire basket
in a public park*

*a child
pulling
at the knees
of time*

*the search
for yesterday*

*vines
of the grape
turning
the oak
to shadow*

*leaves
rustling down
blue currents
of October air*

*silver rails
curving
at a freight*

*a torn
lace curtain
blowing
from an empty window*

DISTANCE OF SPRING

*samaras spin gently,
gently spin,
turning down
sun-bright
currents
of the air—*

*blossoms
of the redbud,
sparks
of chill spring fire,
glow across
the hearth
of April morning—*

*at the eastern gate
you stand
alone,
alone renewed,
where flakes of snow,
the last,
turn dazzling
into blossoms
of the blackberry
poised against
the newly risen sun*

THE PANHANDLE—1937

*sunrise
the broken little town*

*in cracks
across mainstreet
light searches out
lambs quarters
peppergrass
smartweed*

*spiders blink
as the web tightens*

*an old weathervane
with rusted tailfeathers
turns to no where*

*a gas pump
leans uncertain
at the empty street
and windows
blind with light
look down
like secret eyes*

*nesting mice
get homesick here
as clouds
of later morning
gather
for a purple storm*

FLORIDA'S FIRST SNOW

*wind rose cold blue
in the morning;
we went for the milk
pail swinging*

*our feet pure frost
and our lips just numb
we scuffed at the air
to keep ourselves warm*

*and on our return
with milk turning white
in the cold,
we passed through clouds
of palmetto, we
noticed the trembling
of cane*

*and now
like papiermache
the sky began to fall:
it broke to pieces
in our eye
and fell to our feet
like bits
of old light*

IMAGES OF CALUMET

*streamers
of iron dust
shadowing the cities*

*the dandelion
glowing gold
in a corner of April*

*a freight
slow and twisting*

*a green snake
lissome and quick*

*a catcracker
torching
the elements
of sky*

*dune wind
glistening
in the cottonwood,
in the heavy purple
of grape*

Calumet

THE GRANDFATHER

I still wake
In the crisp sun
Of winter's Florida morning,
Dress on the hearth
At the heartwood
Of fire
You've silently left for me,
Then open
The door
To your world still around me,
The high long-leaf pines
With their sly
Windless crows,
And beneath
The gleaming green
Of palmettoes
Where chameleons scoot
Past fingertips of grass.

I walk slow
Down the double track
Of sand-rutted road
To the bridge
That leaps toward the key:
I see you still there,
Elbows on rail,
Your blown hair
Like a stray piece of foam:
I approach
As silent as you,
Your eye intent
On the bobber
Riding curled water:

We said nothing then
If only to speak
To each other
More openly now:
I was child-blind
To courage then,
Learning in spite of myself:
Your silent old fisherman
In your still rising sun
Forever
Tugs at my heart.

TRAINYARD

a long whistle
a wailing low whistle

a dream
that does not end
with waking

a dove mourning
a midsummer death

a cold stretched wire
vibrating blue

a sudden stitch
of loneliness
in the careful fabric
of the heart

long prairie
muffled by
midnight's
drifting snow

PULSE OF THE RAIN

My grandfather,
Dirty out of the digging of ditches,
Welted and triumphant
Out of the roped ring
Where his arms
Worked faster than a shovel,
Courted his girl with the shy gentleness
Of a flower blooming in brambles
On a windy mountain-blue hill
In Ontario.
He recited Burns, and named the trees—
White pine and maple and shimmer of tamarack—
And feared
To put his arm upon her shoulder.
Birds scattered through the woods
Where they walked, boxer and this puzzle
of ringleted girl,
In his stutter of silence.
Curious squirrels
Looked at them
With a sly wagging of tails.
But one afternoon, forgetting himself
As suddenly as rain had swept
Spring clouds down at them,
He hugged her dry against himself
And listened in amazement to her heart
As frantic as his against him.
To such a rain
He owed embrace
Of countless days
Of sun and misty weather—
Pressed indistinguishably
Into the rhythm of happiness.

Untitled

sorrow touches
us close,
aloneness makes us
what we are:
individual as
wind-blown twilight
blinking
on the distance
of horizon:

for all that's close
a few birds
stray through the sky,
wind cries
in occasional
hollows of earth,
and sky levels off
to darkness:

at best,
we smile and do, frown and act,
keep busy from boredom,
dress and appear,
turn slow curious problems
slow in the mind—
all to deceive:

when i gave you the rose,
i did not know,
it took
sudden nakedness
of your eyes and your hand
to tell me again
what the lightest
of touching
can do

The House That Topol Built

Mr. Topol is dead. He is survived by his daughter and two sons. I hadn't thought of Mr. Topol having a family. I'd thought building houses was his only life. He was 72, died yesterday after a long illness—cancer probably, always is—and I'm glad. Not glad that he died, but glad to see his name in print. Proof that he lived a long life.

Mr. Topol was the contractor who built all of the houses on the north side of Otto Street between Wentworth and Burnham Avenues. We—the kids I mean—called him Tojo because he was completely bald and walked like a Sumo wrestler. He wasn't fat. He just walked as if, over a period of years, he had lifted about a million two-by-fours with his legs spread. And he probably had. Mr. Topol spent his whole life building post-war frame houses in Hillview, Illinois, where I grew up.

My parents still live in a cape cod that Mr. Topol built. There are only two kinds of houses on the north side of Otto Street, raised ranches and cape cods—with or without dormers. We had a leaky roof during the first year until my father put up a tar paper layer and new shingles. My father hated Mr. Topol, and probably still does, because of that roof. He talked about Mr. Topol one night at supper.

"That bastard Topol cost me three hundred dollars!"

"Joe, the children."

"Well, he is a bastard, anyhow. Leaving the tar paper off and putting the shingles right on the damn wood. Probably ran out. Said, Go ahead boys. We can't wait for no tar paper."

"I know, Joe. But there's nothing we can do about it so why complain, especially when little ears are around."

My two little sisters were at the table with me. We were the little ears. But I was old enough to know not to ask what a bastard was.

"What's a bastard, Daddy?"

"Well a—that's a person who does something dishonest, Mary Lou. Like someone who sells you something but it's not all there."

"What your father means, dear, is that it's a word we shouldn't use in public."

"It's a swear word, Mommy?"

"Yes, Mary Lou, it's a swear word."

"So why did Daddy say it?"

"Because he's a grown-up. Children shouldn't use swear words."

"Well what can I call Mr. Tojo then, Mommy?"

"You call him by his proper name, dear. You call him Mr. Topol."

My mother gave me her that'll-do-young-man look when she said Topol because she knew that me and my buddies screamed "Tojo! Tojo!" whenever we saw Mr. Topol drive past in his tan Rambler station wagon. I was glad she didn't know about the tricks we played on Mr. Topol, the things we did to the houses he was building.

Corkie and Jay and I lived in the first block of Topol-built homes. It took two years for Topol homes to stretch clear to Burnham. So during that time, weather permitting, Corkie and Jay and I used the unfinished Topol homes for our private playground. At the time we didn't feel guilty about the things we did, I guess because of the way our parents were always complaining about Mr. Topol's mistakes. Corkie's father, an ex-Marine with tattoos to prove it, even called him Tojo.

"My dad had to replace the sump pump again," said Corkie as he stuffed another batch of slugs into his pockets.

The junction boxes in a lot of houses along Otto Street looked like swiss cheese because of Corkie. He collected slugs, filed off the rough edges and saved them in a shoe box.

"Some day I'll find a machine that'll take slugs. I'll have pop or candy forever, you guys. Just you wait and see."

Corkie even tried drawing pictures of eagles and presidents on the slugs. As far as I know he never found that one machine he was looking for. Corkie's a policeman now. At our class reunion he laughed like hell—almost spilled his gin and tonic—and said he'd forgotten all about his slugs, forgotten all about old Tojo. But I haven't.

I picture thin blue sparks jumping through the holes that Corkie pried away with his yellow-handled screwdriver—the one he carried in his father's old Marine knife holster. I picture bits of brown paper from the batts of insulation smoldering, smoldering for years on end and finally bursting into flames in the middle of the night when everyone's asleep. At first Mr. Topol had the junction boxes replaced, but after awhile he gave up. Somewhere in Hillview there's an electrical inspector's widow who's a little richer all because of the slugs Corkie collected. So I guess, in a way, that shoe box full of slugs was worth something.

Jay was a monkey. Swung through the rafters, could do thirty pull-ups at a crack. When he landed on the floor the dust exploded out from between the boards like miniature atom bombs. He wore a red and white striped pair of work gloves on his excursions through the unfinished shells of houses. He found the gloves tucked above a kitchen doorway one day and carried them in his pockets whenever he called me out after supper. Jay tried out for the Olympic gymnastic team a few years later. He didn't make it. Probably should have worn his gloves for luck. Or maybe he didn't make the team because deep in his brain there was still a fear of getting another nail through his hand. Corkie had screamed, "Tojo! Tojo!" In his hurry down through the maze of a cape cod in the dark, Jay crucified his palm and had to wear a bandage for a month. Mr. Topol's flashlight beam hit us in the backs just before we made it over the top of an earth pile that still had bulldozer teeth marks on the hard chunks of clay. In the excitement—I guess that was blood all over—Jay's mother slammed the door on Corkie and me. So we didn't find out till the next morning that Jay was all right. "A clean puncture," said Jay. "Doc says no broken bones or tendons or anything. But it sure hurt like hell. That bum Tojo's gonna pay for this."

Mr. Topol almost paid with his life. For a week Corkie and Jay and I set traps for Mr. Topol—conduit teetering on rafters, wires strung across doorways, nails-up boards on floors—in the dark. Once, when we were leaving because headlights were coming, I turned a board over without telling Jay or Corkie. I didn't want a rusty nail through Mr. Topol's foot. Maybe he'd never had a tetanus shot. Maybe he'd die. But later that same week I helped set the trap that could have killed Mr. Topol.

A busted plank with the two splintered pieces fitted back together like a three dimensional puzzle didn't seem that dangerous. A little fall into the excavation under the front door, no more than a five foot fall onto the clay, feet first. How was I to know that Mr. Topol's head would strike the cement block basement wall? I guess to a nimble twelve-year-old an upturned nail seemed infinitely more dangerous than a fall. Like a jump through a window.

As we ran home that night, Corkie's slugs jingling in his pockets and Jay wearing one of his gloves over the bandage to keep it clean, I didn't know that we'd never go into Mr. Topol's houses again.

I didn't find out about Mr. Topol until the next evening at supper. My father was reading his paper. He'd just blown cigarette smoke into a glass for me so I could make brown spots on white sheets of paper. I was all set to take out the garbage when it was ready and then call out Corkie and Jay.

"Well what do you know. Old man Topol finally got his deserts."

"What do you mean, Joe?"

"Says here old man Topol fell last night while he was inspecting one of his houses and cracked his skull."

"Was he badly hurt?"

"Well, he's in the hospital in fair condition. Worker's found him in the morning. They thought he was dead but the old guy laid there all night, unconscious."

I was sick that night. Threw up into the toilet while my mother held my shoulders. Spoonfuls of Pepto Bismol as I lay on my back in bed thinking about Mr. Topol. I pictured him looking like my grandfather just before he died. The hospital had let me go up to his room with my father. There were plastic tubes up his nose and a bottle of yellowish juice dripping into another tube that led to his arm. I pictured Mr. Topol's head split open, his brains showing, pink like calve's brains at the grocery store.

I thought about how Mr. Topol must have inspected our house while it was being built. He would inspect each room, check what the workers had done that day. He would shine his flashlight down into the hole where the basement stairs would be. He didn't go down into the basement, though. Didn't climb down the makeshift ladder—a plank with little pieces of scrap wood nailed on—into the darkness that smelled like wet cement and clay and urine.

Corkie and Jay and I had been in a basement once, laying a path of boards ahead of us on the mud when we heard footsteps in the living room above. We hid in the corner up to our ankles in mud and held our hands over our mouths when Mr. Topol's flashlight beam shot through the dark like the search light in a prison movie. The light blinded me for a second and I saw orange spots while I waited for the footsteps to complete the maze above. We figured that Mr. Topol had not stuck his head down into the basement hole, just his flashlight. Later, scuffing our feet and legs in my back yard grass trying to get the mud off, we agreed that Mr. Topol had not seen us.

As I lay in bed, my hands holding my stomach, I thought about Mr. Topol lying in the hospital. He'd remember the glowing eyes of three rats crouched together in the mud. Three rats who had tried to kill him because of a nail, or just because he loved the houses he built and insisted on putting them to bed each night.

I was glad to get back to school that year. The last two weeks of the summer vacation stretched into days of sitting in the front yard pulling up clumps of grass, looking at every car that went by. No tan Rambler wagon. At night I stayed home and played with my sisters because whenever Corkie and Jay and I were together our talk lapsed eventually into silence, into, "Yeah, well, see you guys later."

We found out through Corkie's father that Mr. Topol still ran the show, but he did it from his office. "Dad says he's kind of semi-retired."

"Did he say anything about his head?"

"No."

"How's your hand doin', Jaybird?"

"Oh, it's okay. Doc says it healed like new."

"That's good."

"Yeah."

"Yeh, well, I got to get home. School starts tomorrow."

"Yeah, see you guys later."

The three of us did pretty well in school—made other friends, stayed out of trouble, got jobs and wives. Jay moved away from Hillview and, like I said, Corkie's a cop. He stopped me once for speeding and let me off after he recognized my face behind my beard, or my name on my license, I don't know which.

Mr. Topol is dead and I'll never forget him. I'm glad that he lived a long life. He built a damn good home.

In more recent years Topol and Sons Construction took on bigger projects downtown. The Hillview Funeral Home, where he's lying right now with his hands folded over his stomach, was one of his final projects.

MICHAEL BERGES



Warren Arnold

GOODBYE

*Children's laughter,
the groaning of rusted swings
settles muffled
behind a pair
of misty eyes.*

A setting sun
turns
the clouds into
wisps
of cold fire
then
fades
into twilight. . .

The air
chilled to
stark clarity,
and
no illusions
allowed.

E. MICHAEL MASLAR

SALLY

*She sings a song of loving,
She makes a game of life.
She has no need to be their mother,
Nor care to be his wife.*

*Her past is what she longs for,
Her future holds her fears,
Her dreaming does not stop at dawn,
And seldom do her tears.*

*Make for her a bed of roses,
Removing first the thorns and stems,
Feed her wine and ripe, red berries,
Cover her with silks and gems.*

*Make for her a dream to live in,
Removing all the pain of life,
She has no need to be their mother,
Nor care to be his wife.*

EVELYN LAZZELL

RUNNING THROUGH FIELDS

*Running through fields gaily,
Loving the wind with my breath.
Eyes fondling clouds, gently
Pressing with bare feet earth.*

*I am wrapt in sunlight.
Slating arms caress, embrace;
Hands bright make hair golden-gilt.
Warm lips kiss.*

*Willingly seduced, succumb,
Mistress of a Master sweet,
Drowsy in maiden love I lie.
Contented, I sleep.*

LINDA NOBLE LEMOND

IT'S A TOUGH LIFE

*Drinkin' coffee makes me nervous,
got a cough from cigarettes,
eyes are drippin' from the ozone,
and rock music's made me deaf.*

*My kids are gettin' violent,
they've absorbed it from T.V.,
and I'm sinkin' in depression,
from the headlines that I read.*

*I've got frostbit toes from wearin',
high heeled, backless, toeless shoes,
and from the diet pop I'm drinkin',
got those saccarin-cancer blues.*

*I've no cause for feelin' sorry,
for myself, or anyone,
it's a tough life we are livin',
in a world that we have spun.*

*Now I gave up eatin' bacon,
and I've sworn off guzzlin' beer,
I've cut out eggs and butter,
it's cholesterol I fear.*

*I'm hooked on taking Valium,
which my doctor still denies,
and I'm short and fat and ugly,
which Americans despise.*

*I can't afford to buy a home,
the mortgage rate's too high,
and I'm working my vacation,
cause there ain't no gas to buy.*

*I've no cause for feelin' sorry,
for myself, or anyone,
it's a tough life we are livin',
in a world that we have spun.*

*My hairdryer sheds asbestos,
my car's just been recalled,
and for the cost of oil heating,
I lack the wherewithall.*

*Can't take my family to the movies,
most are X, R, or PG,
and my garden's good for nothin',
cause it's full of DDT.*

*I've no cause for feelin' sorry,
for myself or anyone,
it's a tough life we are livin',
in a world that we have spun.*

ROSE MARIE ANDERSON

ONE LANE BRIDGE

*These country roads with one lane bridges
Built by men of philosophy
and faith in their fellow man.
Learn patience as each car
takes its turn.*

*First one side, then the other,
one by one.*

*Hope springs eternal that one day
you will be there all alone.*

*Charity is fostered as you wait
while an eager beaver crowds behind
and begins a mass exodus from
the other side.*

Learn patience.

*Soon it will be all yours—
That one lane bridge—
For a moment.*

MARILYN RIGGLE

DAISIES

*A harem of new brides
in white robes
turned their golden faces
upward
toward their radiant,
polygamous bridegroom—
the sun.*

ELLEN LAWRENCE

Our Neighborhood Character

I grew up in a typical neighborhood of yesteryear where everybody knew everybody else. Kids played and fought together and were friends and went to school together. Fathers went to work every day and mothers washed clothes on Monday, ironed on Tuesday, cleaned house the rest of the week and baked on Saturday. Not exciting by today's standards, but this is the way it was.

Many small towns or neighborhoods boasted and made fun of a town drunk or neighborhood character. We had one but we never boasted of him nor did we make fun of him. He was simply known as "old man Andrews".

He lived in an old, ramshackle, abandoned store, although no one could remember when it had been a store, as such. The huge store-front window was covered with an old multi-patched dark green shade, day and night. No light got in and no light was ever seen coming out. We lived next door to the old store and after the initial apprehension of living so close, went about the business of live and let live.

Old man Andrews never spoke to anyone or bothered anyone. In fact, he was hardly ever seen. He wasn't as old as some thought for he went to work every day. There was some speculation, at first, as to if and where he worked. He was seen getting off a bus regularly at a manufacturing plant in a nearby town so it was assumed that he was gainfully employed and not destitute.

He had two huge dogs which appeared to be a mixture of wolf, blood hound and shetland pony and they, like their owner, never bothered anyone or growled or barked. They would accompany the old man to the bus-stop early every morning and wait with him until he boarded the bus. Then they would return home and lay under the stoop of the old store. At about a quarter to six every evening, with uncanny instinct, the two dogs would get up, stretch, and saunter to the bus-stop to escort the old man home as he got off the six o'clock bus. He'd walk with his shuffling gait in his old threadbare coat and his shapeless slouch hat pulled low over his face so that all you could see was his chin and raggedy gray mustache. He'd go into the old store and the dogs would go back under the stoop and that was that.

I used to wonder sometimes what the dogs would do if he didn't get off the bus. I was soon to find out and this is a story in itself. Listen now, and I'll tell it to you.

Old man Andrews was a periodic drunk and this he didn't do half-heartedly. At least once every two months or so, he would not be on the six o'clock bus, having stopped at some saloon along the way. No matter, the dogs would wait uncomplainingly at the bus-stop, be it ten o'clock, midnight or two in the morning, fair weather or foul, until eventually the bus would come and the old man would clamber off. Then the three of them would start the half-block journey home. This trip was more arduous than scaling the Matterhorn. The old man would stagger and stumble and fall over fences and hedges. He'd lay in front yards until he could struggle up and start off again. All the while, the dogs would walk patiently along side, or if he fell, sit or lie beside him until he could get to his feet once more. Neighbors, peering furtively from their homes, longed to go out and help him but, ever fearful of the dogs, could only watch in silent sympathy. The police were never called, for this was our neighborhood character and we wanted no interference with him or his canine protectors. A sigh of relief could be felt throughout the neighborhood when the old man was finally seen to crawl laboriously up the stairs and disappear into the old store. The dogs would watch the door for a moment and then crawl under the stoop. The next day life would go on as before and, to our knowledge, the old man never missed a day of work.

My mother, as well as other neighbor ladies, was convinced that the old man wasn't eating well, for he never took groceries in and none was ever seen delivered. They were continually setting pots of homemade soup or stew at the door of the old store. On Thanksgiving, the neighbors made sure that the old man had a big dinner too, complete with all the trimmings. At Christmas time, in addition to the food that was set by the door of the old store, there were also gifts, such as knitted scarves and warm mittens that we thought he could use.

The old store was never bypassed when we went caroling on Christmas Eve and the old man would never know the number of times he was mentioned in our prayers in church or at the dinner table.

My dad would keep the weeds in the old man's front yard mowed down, taking care to get it done when the dogs were absent.

Us kids would holler and yell as we played games outside in the street and the old man never came out to complain. It was unthinkable that we antagonize him with Halloween pranks.

If you're wondering, by now, why we did these things for a lonely old man, perhaps there's your answer. We had families and friends and he was alone and had nobody.

Now here is the strange part. For being a semi-recluse, old man Andrews had an incredible knowledge of neighborhood happenings.

There was a dilapidated old barn that leaned with the wind in back of the old store. It was full of old dusty trunks and boxes that we were sure contained untold treasure. It was also full of spider webs and rats and other spooky things so that nobody dared venture inside. One day our taped-up, re-stitched old baseball rolled into the barn and nobody volunteered to retrieve it. A day or two later, we were sitting in a row on the curb when an arm emerged from the door of the old store and tossed a brand new baseball to us.

Junior Abney, who lived a few doors down the street, had been on crutches for six of his ten years. With the thoughtlessness of children, he left his crutches lay near the curb and a delivery truck backed over them while he was playing with friends on a front lawn. When Mr. Abney stepped out of the house to get the mail a few days later, there was a new pair of crutches leaning against the front porch.

Freddie Hazen and his family were broken hearted when their dog was run over in the alley behind their house. A day or two later, as Freddie was passing the old store on the way home from school, the door opened and an arm set a box on the stoop and motioned to him. In it was a fury little puppy.

Two of the little Fields kids had to sit patiently on the front steps watching their brother sail by on the one pair of roller-skates which all three shared. One morning there was a box on their front porch with two pairs of skates in it. See what I mean?

Now I'm not trying to make a mystery story of this, although to us in the neighborhood, that's the way it appeared at first. This wasn't a sudden splurge of generosity on the old man's part, nor on ours either for that matter. This all took place over a period of some four and a half years and were just a few of many instances. Although it soon became obvious where the source of these unexpected gifts lie, no amount of attempts to repay or even to thank the old man, met with any results, so we gave up trying.

For reasons known only to himself, he chose this way of life and was tolerated, no, accepted into a small section of society that may well have regarded him as only a drunken old bum. This was his way of thanking us.

One day a mailman, new to the route, mistakenly left mail in our box intended for someone else. The letter had four or five foreign looking stamps on it and the postmark read London, England and was addressed to the Hon. Allison T. Andrews. The old man was the only Andrews in the neighborhood and the address was his so I checked for the dogs and skipped next door and dropped it in his box. You may be sure this letter incident caused several raised eyebrows for a while but then it was forgotten.

On a bright Easter Sunday morning several weeks later, we were all hurriedly getting ready to go to church when my dad, glancing out the front window, noticed the beautiful, long, black limousine parked in front of the old store next door. Knowing full well that our curiosity might make us late for church, we waited and peered, unobserved we hoped, out the windows to see that this could mean. You can bet the whole neighborhood was doing likewise. Presently three elegantly dressed ladies and a fine looking elderly gentleman came out of the old store and got in the limousine. Then, and I know everyone watching gasped, out came old man Andrews. He was dressed as fine as the other gentleman and his mustache was trimmed and he was bareheaded and his hair shone like silver in the morning sunlight. He stopped on the front walk and looked at every house up and down both sides of the street for a long, long moment. Then he got in the car and it drove away and we never saw him again.

We were dumbfounded! Where had they come from and where had they gone, and why? Was there a hidden parallel here, what with Easter Sunday and the story of being born again? Ah, of course not. Still . . . we didn't know who to ask to find the answers. We did know that we were going to miss him. No one really knew him but we all hoped that he felt we loved him a little, in our own way and that maybe he loved us a little in his.

We moved away a short time later and it was some years before I returned to the old neighborhood, not a good thing to do. The mystery will remain unsolved, for the two big dogs and the barn and the old store are gone too.

We had our very own neighborhood character for a while though, and I'm glad we did.

JIM THORLEY

THE WORDS

*They melted into my mind,
like a Fannie May mint,
disappearing into the core of my mouth.
Seeping into my brain,
like plasma into the soul of a dying man.
they crept,
they woke me,
they shook me,
till I felt as though they would not stop.
Then they loosened their tightness.
they led my mind on,
through soft petals and fields,
dangling from above,
protruding from below.
They filled the journey with delight.
They had achieved,
they had conveyed,
they had become.*

YVONNE WILSON

REALIZATION OF LIFE

*Realize life while you live it, every second, every day!
It's yours for only a moment, to make the most of in every way.
When you feel life's stress and strain, pause . . .
But don't let yourself fall, for life contains loveliness for all
Many beautiful and splendid things,
A peaceful sunset, a soft breeze that sings.
The majesty of trees so heavenly tall
With branches reaching out, forming a magnificent wall.
A glorious rainbow that's God's pot of gold,
A dream-come-true vision that's yours to have and hold.*

*The breath of spring, so light and gay
That leads to summer's happy glowing way.
And fall with magical colors so marvelously bright,
Followed by winter snow that glows in the night.
An ocean that sings out a song, if you will listen.
A night full of stars to wish on that glisten.
The soft falling raindrops, so gentle, so new;
All God's splendid artistry, God's gift for you.*

*So much magnificence surrounds you today
If you will look about you in a very special way.
Never take life for granted, a very special gift . . .
Full of sound and fury, with beauty to give you a lift.
With eyes that love you, arms that hold
A child's sweet voice more precious than gold.
A treasured friend in times of happiness and strife.
With music, art and books adding much to your life.
Realize life while you live it, before it's too late;
For the time we have left, is in the hands of fate.*

EVELYN LAHAIE

MENTAL PLUMBING

*My brain
is an obstinate faucet.
When I need it to flow,
the spigot won't budge.
Yet, in bed,
when I try to sleep,
it drips thoughts
to keep me awake all night.*

ELLEN LAWRENCE

PRISONERS . . . ALL!

*What is a prisoner?
Need he be surrounded by walls, gates
And bars to be a prisoner?
No . . . Man can make himself a prisoner;
A prisoner of his own thoughts,
Creator of his own private prison,
Entrapped, imprisoned by his own choosing
In a situation that he seems to be chained to.
And so I say to you:
Although your body may be confined,
Never imprison your heart, your soul
Or your mind.*

EVELYN LAHAIE

TODAY

I sit here now,
just a month from my eighteenth birthday,
and listen,
while a substitute teacher reads to us
from today's paper.

She abandons all the vulgar four letter words
and recites the profane five letter words,
DRAFT,
and then the ever unpopular three letter word
WAR.

We shudder inwardly,
but no one retorts.
we're hoping it will come to pass.

Last night I saw a production here.
a beautiful, moving pageant.
performed by youngsters like myself.
Gifted youngsters. . .they were.

Most of my friends are waiting on letters of acceptance,
from various college boards.

Most of us,
even know what we want to be,
who we want to be.

We want to be nineteen,
then twenty
and twenty-five
then forty,
we want to retire at seventy,
and live till ninety.

We want to be people,
living people. . .functioning people,
people with the heart beat of purpose pounding inside,
not the intent to kill, to slaughter,
or to be slaughtered.

We are your children,
children as innocent as lambs.

Mother Freedom are you listening to me!
Do you hear what we're about!

Still you intend to send these lambs to slaughter.
Go ahead,
Slaughter the wave of talented performers,
Slaughter the future doctors, lawyers, etheologists,
grocers, butchers, carpenters, and architects of America.

Send an entire generation to be killed,
men and women alike.

When there are other ways.
And when we're gone.

And if and when we come back
D.O.A.
in a neat little box.

I hope we leave a whole in this country,
a large burning hole,
a sharp piercing hole,
a deep hole,
a hole that swallows you up and makes you ever so aware of,
our absence.

Maybe then you'll learn,
but that's a fantasy,
for you see,
this time there will be
only losers.

WE WERE ONE

The sky met the sea
And they were one.

That being
swept toward me
in a mist
And encompassed me.

We were one.

I was alive
with the breath
Of the universe.

That power
that surged
in the waves
Beat in my heart.

The mist
Was my soul
And I rejoiced!

LINDA S. NETHERY



Warren Arnold

CHAPTER 1

I cut him wide and I cut him deep. It wasn't much of a fight; he was a big 'un and I knew I'd best be topplin' that tree of a man quick or it was the end of Lucius Adams. Blood had spurted out all over me and it did rile me some 'cause I had nary a coin for new duds, and it was goin' to be awhile before I latched onto any. Now I was gonna have to walk around lookin' and smellin' like one of them buffalo hunters I happened onto once. They got to be the awfulest smellin' bodies a man could ever chance onto.

I spotted a gambler with a lean, hungry look about him, like he could take a feller's last dollar and do it smilin'. He stared hard at me, then yawned and turned around like he done seen it all before. I reckoned he had too. Some old whore was screamin' for the law and just about every soul in that crowded room was talkin' at once. I moved back, tryin' to keep everyone in front of me 'cause you never know when a body's friend will pop you. But I reckon that big tree hadn't a friend in the world 'cause not a man laid a hand on me. Got myself out of there right quick, I did.

Pap, he told me long time ago never to hang 'round them places where the jug was emptied more'n twice in a night. Reckon I know what he was gettin' at now. Hadn't took but a couple of minutes in there for me to get mixed in that trouble.

I was nearin' the barn where my mule was tied when I caught the sound of a heavy man runnin' likity-split down the street, headin' my way. I lay back, aimin' to see what's up. But this feller, he 'pears to be huntin' me special, 'cause he stops where I'm standin' in the shadows and calls out.

"Hey boy! Come on out."

Now, Pap didn't raise no fool, so I called back to that big dummy standin' there makin' such a fine target in the moonlight: "Speak right out, mister. Say your piece."

"Boy, you best be clearin' out. This town and this whole territory ain't no safe place for the likes of you. Reckon you best not stop till you get to the Pacific Ocean, kid."

Now, that was a queer tale if I ever heard one, so I ups and asks him, "Why would I want to go to this 'Pafik Osun' place?"

He just stands there starin' like he don't believe I asked him what I did. I saw he wasn't lookin' to do me harm, so I walked out of the dark and stood there lookin' up at him. He run a big hand through a mane of black hair, shook his head and grinned.

"Boy, you beat all I ever did see. Here you split the gizzard of this town's leading citizen and you're asking me why you shouldn't travel." He chuckled, which seemed to me like he was sayin' he was glad I done for the leadin' citizen.

"Mister, that tall son might have been a leadin' citizen to you but he was a man aholt of my throat, takin' the life out of me like I was a mangy dog."

The big man, he just rocks back on his boot heels and says, "Boy, Hank Basil wasn't a gentle man, that's true, and there ain't a soul in this town will miss him, but there's a passel of Basils in the foothills will miss him. That's why you best light out of here and don't stop. Reckon we felt we owed you. Hank was a big spender, but he put the fear of God in more than one man in this town. Don't suppose any of us will miss that."

Well, you could have knocked me down with a feather. I ain't been done many favors in my sixteen years, and since comin' out of them hills in Kentucky I couldn't count nary a one. It struck me kinda hard, this gent givin' me the high sign, like that. So, I give him a thank you and lit a shuck, but not to that Pafik Osun, cause I never knowed that place. Sounded like some place over in the Injun lands, and I ain't hankerin' to get cross of them souls, not by a long sight.

I figured I'd stick to where I been headed all along. It was Texas for me. I was up on my mule Fred in a wink and Texas bound. I put that town out of sight in a mighty quick time.

'Bout four days I spotted riders comin' slow and easy on my trail, on purpose hangin' back. Pap taught this boy trailin' real good and I always run back on my trail, so I spotted 'em early. Figured they must be kin folk of this Basil I cut.

Now Fred, he ain't much and he was mighty lean even before we left home. We'd moved through some rough and strange country and so it didn't come as no surprise when he up and quit on me. I been quit on a time or two so I knowed it would be a day or so till Fred got his stubborn over. I made camp and waited for that bunch trailin' to catch up. Wasn't no place to go, so I figured I'd best settle the matter now as later. Likely, they'd have caught me even if Fred hadn't quit on me.

Pa used to be the best rifle shot in them hills where I growed up. Course, I got to admit I never did see too many folk there, but I know there couldn't have been no better'n Pap. I never

Goin' to Texas

did see him miss even once. Reckon I got pretty good too, with such a good teacher, but I never really took to that rifle. Probably 'cause when I was just a pup, he always made me carry a big, .44 Colt Dragoon. I kept it shoved down the front of my pants and Ma, she quit sewin' buttons on them pants 'cause that gun kept poppin' 'em off. Piece of rope served just as well.

I got to pop all the small game, while Pap took care of anything else. Reckon I ain't lyin' none if I say I could hit a rabbit on the second hop and tumble a squirrel 'fore he climbed a tail's length. We'd spot a rabbit and I'd snatch that iron out of my pants faster'n a billy goat's wink, aim and fire, all 'fore the second hop was done. Always hit 'em too.

I limbered up a mite while I waited for them riders. I checked my loads, dragged Pap's old rifle out of my roll and got up on my perch. Right soon I figured on dodgin' some lead.

They rode in proud, settin' high and lookin' wide. That big ugly in the lead made a pretty good target, and I liked to have give in and took him right off that high steppin' mare, but Pap always taught me to be polite. That don't mean I give a dog the first bite, but I reckon I owed 'em notice that it wasn't no child they was huntin' and that it might be some of them was gonna get killed.

That Big Ugly jerked up sharp when I hollered out, and them green eyes latched onto me like I was a piece of deer meat in a smoke house. I grinned a little, showin' I ain't about to start no war, and there was quiet for a small piece of time.

Big Ugly had a scar runnin' down the side of his ear to his bottom lip. Shore didn't help that face of his none. He spit a stream of brown chaw juice out and said, "Kid, I ain't gonna mince words with you none. There's six of us and one of you. We're gonna take you back ridin' or belly down, however you choose to make it."

One thing Pap did teach me good was when to talk and when to fight. I seen right off there wasn't no amount of talkin' goin' to change their minds about takin' me. So, I didn't bother with that speech I had planned, and hauled on that old Colt restin' easy against my stomach. 'Bout all them boys was surprised, but one. Big Ugly was an old he-coon, for sure. Reckon he saw the shine in my eye and the fact there wasn't no fear shakin' my bones, 'cause he lit off his horse and was puttin' lead my way almost as quick as I was puttin' lead into that pack.

I put two of 'em down right off, then I put the wind in my ears 'cause Big Ugly had bought 'em time. Wasn't for him, I could have put away four at least. I made it up the side of that mountain into some scrub pine. They was gonna have to work some to tree this boy. I reckoned they'd have to come after me on foot on account of the way bein' so rough. Ain't a horse built could take the ground I was takin'. I figured everything was goin' my way 'cause I was young, strong as a mule is stubborn, and quicker'n a rabbit to a hole.

But, if you ever get to mixin' bullets with a crowd, don't ever think you got 'em foxed. Pap taught me well, but there was still some kid in me, 'cause I got me an idea that liked to have killed me. I knowed that bunch would be froggin' after me up that mountain side and I figured they'd leave the horses with one of that bunch. So, I follows on this idea. It liked to have been the end of me.

Now, it wasn't that it was such a bad idea. 'Nuther time or place it likely would have been alright, but I didn't take into account that I was playin' around with a curly wolf, smarter'n a fox, and wiser than any sixteen year old kid. He treed too many

"Boy, there's gonna be a necktie party soon and you're the one bein' strung." The voice paused, then he went on. "They're gettin' likkered up over in the Palace and I guess it will be soon that they come for you. Ain't nobody in this town havin' a part in it, just the Basil clan and a few of their friends."

I recognized that voice now. It was the same gent that had give me the advice to leave. Reckon if a body needed a friend at any time he'd do for sure.

I asked, "Aint no way you could be latchin' onto my pistol and my knife, is there?" I never did care to burden another body with my misery, but he'd done come out into the night twice on my account and I reckon I figured him as a friend. Body can't burden a friend, who can he ask for help?

That friend was silent for a minute, then he says, "I think your stuff is tied on one of the horses out front of the Palace. They ain't even took the time to grain their horses. I'll be back in a little."

Well, it turned out that he was right about that. It only took my friend a few ticks of time to fetch me my guns and knife. He even brought a rain slicker that wasn't mine. We whispered some about how to get it all into me. They had a man at the door and one at the window in back but they wasn't movin' like a man on guard should. We finally found a loose board and made it a whole lot looser at the bottom. Took a little whittlin' with my blade and some pryin' with the muzzle of my pistol, but we got them two through. Lookin' back I ain't sure why we even tried to get that dumb rifle through. It shore wasn't the smartest thing I ever tried to do. We finally give up on gettin' the rifle through, but as he was draggin' it out there was a squeak made on a nail with the barrel. He pulled it out real fast then while I froze.

Sure enough, I hear a yell, then a couple of shots. I heard a groan and the sound of runnin'. Then I went sick inside, 'cause I heard both them guards talkin' about who they shot.

"Town ain't gonna like this, Will."

"How'd I know who it was sneakin' out back here? Mayors ain't supposed to be sneakin' around a jail in the dark!"

The voices got low then, arguin'. I got the idea they was wonderin' where to plant the body, 'cause it was plain they didn't want it known they shot the mayor. That set me back on my heels some, thinkin' that an important man like that would be helpin' me. I was feelin' awful bad too, on account of him bein' killed helpin' me. Just didn't seem right that a man like that should go under, while the likes of them two was still walkin' about on the ground.

Just then I hear a rush of feet and lot of voices. Reckon them two wasn't goin' to have to worry about their problem with that body 'cause the crowd found it. There was yellin' and hollerin' and a lot of cussin' goin' on for awhile. I listened close and heard them two tell that crowd a tale.

The one guard was sayin', "We heard the shots, too! Somebody look see if the prisoner escaped. Maybe he done it!"

I just shook my head at such nonsense. They was worse fools than I figured if they expected the crowd to believe that. Right then I heard another voice in the crowd say, "Who'd want to shoot John? Had to be a drifter or such. Everybody spread out and look for him!"

Well, it beat all I ever did see. That whole crowd swallowed that line and melted into the night like butter in a skillet. I heard them guards chucklin' about it. One of 'em says, "Ole Arnie shore pulled the trick out of the hat, didn't he?" The other agrees and they got back to their guardin'. Ain't a soul ever came to check on me.

I waited after that for things to quiet down some. I had my mind made up that I wasn't gonna wait for no neck tyin' party to come down the road after me. I was riled. It wasn't just myself I was thinkin' of now, but of that friend layin' there in his blood, on account of me. Blood for blood. Pap always taught me that. Said it came straight from the Good Book, and I ain't one to deny the Book. So, I made up my mind right then and there to get loose of this place and even the score some for my friend.

Pretty soon I got up and tapped on the door soft like. The guard came to the door right quick. "Whatcha want?" He wasn't soundin' too kind, like it bothered him that a kid like me would be fool enough to bother him.

"Hey you! I'm gonna tell, before I die, that it was you, planted the mayor."

Ain't nuthin' but dead silence followed that. I could almost hear the thinkin' and him reachin' the decision I knew he'd make. He would reckon on them believin' me, 'cause there shore wasn't no drifter about, and everyone kinda gives some respect

coons in his day to be taken by that one. Besides that, I found out later that the only place to go after apiece in the direction I lit out, was back down. Up just petered out.

I come sneakin' down full of my idea, grinnin' and chewin' on a blade of grass, like I had narry a care in the world. Reckon it's a good thing I come down so quick, 'cause if I'd waited till they was all set, I'd not be tellin' this tale. Really thought I had me an idea, I did. Goin' to show them boys, I was.

Pow! Somebody opened up on me right soon and I got to huggin' the rocks like they was my Ma and Pap. I heard 'em yellin' for the others to come on over and I knew then I was in for a bad time. I couldn't even go back the way I come, now. All I could hope for was to sneak away in the dark, but somehow I knew that wouldn't be possible with Big Ugly around.

Then that old son ups and yells at me: "Kid! We want to take you back alive. Rest of the folk want to see the end of you. Come on out."

Now, I was doin' some fast thinkin'. It was plain that I was dead meat at the moment. But if I let them boys take me back there wasn't no tellin' what might happen. Long as a body is breathin' there's hope and Pap always told me never to pass no rabbit holes without pokin' a stick in. There might be some meat waitin' in there for you, but you'd never know it if you didn't look. So, I figured I'd have a look see in this rabbit hole Big Ugly tells me about.

"Hey! Big Ugly!" Funny how that got an answer from the one I intended it for. He hollered right back. Probably cussed himself for speakin' out so quick. I speaks my piece, but it shore wasn't easy, not by a long site. I said, "Call off your dogs. This side is givin' up."

"Thrown out the guns, then grab some clouds!" Didn't take long for him to give orders.

I did just that and walked out slow and easy, my hands held high so they could see there wasn't nuthin' dangerous about me. They flocked about me like a pack of hound dogs around a possum, shovin' me, cussin' me, callin' me things I never even heard in all my born days, and makin' promises about how they was gonna stretch my neck, western style. They told me 'bout a tree they had special for that. But I didn't say a word, 'cause talkin' ain't no good in a time like that. They plopped me aboard a pack horse and we set off for town.

We made good time, but it was still near five days 'fore we got back. You'd have thought they was bringin' in a wagon load of deer meat, instead of just one tired boy. They gathered 'round us, walkin' and chatterin' like a tree full of robbed squirrels, some of 'em cussin' me, cuffin' me and makin' them same promises about that tree. Reckon they was all Basilis. Shore was a gatherin' of 'em.

I was throwed right off into a room servin' as a jail. Wasn't no bars on the window, but I had a look see and spotted a man outside with a rifle. A little cot was near the wall and looked invitin' so I stretched out and was sleepin' in no time.

CHAPTER 2

"Ps-s-t! Hey boy!" That whisper reached into my brain and woke me right off. Somebody was tryin' to talk to me and it was plain he wasn't carin' to be heard by anyone else but me. I sat up and then creped over to the wall where the voice was at.

"Yeah, I hear you," I whispered back.

to the words of a dyin' man. I mean, you sorta got to believe that a man about to meet his Maker ain't goin' to go out with no lies on his lips. So, that guard only had one choice: kill me, then call it an escape attempt.

I waited for the door to open. Only thing bothered me was if he called the other guard from the back of the cabin. It would make my job harder. But, it turned out he decided to take care of this poor boy all by his lonesome.

The door swung open and he's standin' there in the moonlight, a nice target, but I don't want no shootin' yet. Besides, I figure he's gonna take me outside and shoot me there. Beats draggin' a body.

"Kid, I been mistaken. You ain't as bad as they make you to be." He turned his head and spit, then added, "I'm gonna turn you loose on account of that, and because I don't want you tellin' tales. Works out fine for both of us."

That fool must have thought my Pap growed a melon for a son. But, I just shows him my teeth and pretends I'm taken with the idea.

"That sounds like a mighty fine idea you got there." Then, I allowed a little look of suspicion cross my face. Got to put this fool completely off his guard. I said, "How do I know you ain't just goin' to shoot me?"

That fool laughs like it was the dumbest thing ever said by a human. He answered, "You are the murderer, kid. I ain't built like that."

I tried to look reassured, so I smiled and said, "Well, you just point that gun else where, like maybe at the moon, and keep it that way till I gets down the road a piece, then maybe I'll believe you. Otherwise, I ain't budgin'."

He laughs again, like I was stupid for askin' such a thing, but he said, "Sure, kid." Then he pointed that rifle up to the sky and grinned like a fox in the chicken house.

He took the bait, swallered it whole and never even blinked. I walked out and just as I was passin' him I slid that cold steel into his brisket hard. It stiffened him, he gurgled and choked on that wad he had in his mouth, and when I stepped off the porch he was leakin' his life out all over them boards.

I thought he'd make enough noise to wake the dead, and I laid back waitin' for somebody to show, particularly that other guard. But, he had gone down pretty quiet and nobody showed. I Injuned back to the rear of that cabin and before I even got there I was grinnin'. That other fool was sound asleep and I could hear him snorin'.

He was snorin' like he was home on a feather bed, only thing he wasn't. He was sittin' up, back against that cabin. He smelled like one of them jugs Pap told me to stay away from.

Now, it ain't nice what I tried to do next, but you got to understand that I was powerful upset by the way those two had done my friend. I had my blood up and it wasn't no time for bein' polite or nice. I figured on killin' him, but then I couldn't do it while he was asleep. Ain't nobody deserves to die like that.

I shook him hard, cuffed him about some, and dropped my jaw about a foot when that fool went on sleepin'. He wasn't no sleepin' man, he was a snorin' corpse! I tell you, I kicked that man in the side, pricked his ear with my knife, slugged him in the belly, rapped him on the skull with my pistol, and about the only thing he did was stop snorin' once. I figured that even if he did open his eyes I'd still be killin' a sleepin' man, so I shoved him over and left.

It was hard to do what I done next, 'cause I figured my chances of comin' out alive wasn't more'n that of a deer in a pack of wolves. But, there are some things a body has to do and Pap would be rollin' over in his grave if I rode out of that town without payin' my respects. I reckon I had to even things a mite for me and my friend the mayor, even if it cost me my life. Besides, I knew that Big Ugly would be after me and there ain't no sense in a body havin' to look over his shoulder all his life. May as well settle his hash, right off. His kind don't stop till they're in Hell, and then that Big Ugly would likely be stackin' bodies high enough to climb the walls. Boy like me don't need no trouble like that trailin' him.

So, I checked my loads and set out for the Palace Saloon, where it all started. Since the back door was used as much as the front I figured it didn't make much difference which door I came in. One was as bad as the other. I pushed aside them funny doors on the front and stepped in quiet.

There was a lot of noise and talkin', just like the last time I was there. Soon as I got spotted though, it was like everyone had pine sap poured in their jaws. Nuthin' in that room but a

bunch of starin' eyes and clamped jaws. Hats got pushed back to get a better see, and chairs scraped to do the same.

I opened up some words, 'cause I wanted it plain that it was the Basils I was after and not no town folks. A body walks in and starts shootin' he's gonna have everybody throwin' lead at him. So, I declared right out who I was huntin'.

"I come for Big Ugly and any of them that stand 'side of him, kin or no." That was powerful strong words comin' from a kid, I know, but like I said, my blood was up and like a horse with the bit in his jaws, there wasn't no stoppin' me. I was bound to make my brag. I had kinda thought there'd be bodies divin' for cover and lead come flyin' out of that crowd, but nary a soul stirred.

I called out, "Big Ugly! You come on out so you and me can settle this thing." While I was waitin' for him, I told that crowd about the killin' of my friend the mayor. You could tell that had put 'em off their feed. I heard some cussin' near the back, then that big tree come leanin' out of that crowd, a drink in his hand and a grin on that ugly face.

I don't reckon I ever felt smaller in my life, him lookin' down at me like I was a bug or such, but I looked up at him and said, "I'm here to topple you. Let it be with knife or gun, 'cause you're too big for me to wallop. Then, you kin can line up and have their try."

He laughed hard at that, he did. I reckon it was sorta funny, too, a kid like me challengin' such as he. Kind of like that story my Pap read me out of the Book. There was a Big Ugly back in them days, too.

He said, "Kid, you got more spunk than four growed men and less brains than a herd of sheep. I reckon all things wooly is dumb." He drank the rest of that glass in his hand, looks hard at me, then said, "Reckon I can't go shootin' at a kid like that, even if he is just a nigger."

Pap always talk me to walk careful 'round folks who was sayin' one thing and doin' another with their eyes. Big Ugly, he was smilin' with his face, but he was shootin' with his eyes. And that word he used, "nigger," didn't strike no fire with me then, 'cause I wasn't too sure what it meant. I was called that a lot by them riders when they caught me in the mountains, and even that Hank man I cut called me "nigger." I figured it meant scrawny and had something to do with bein' a kid. I reckoned that with so many of 'em callin' me that, it just had to be that I was one.

Big Ugly, he claps a couple of men across the back and hollers, "Drinks on me, boys!" Then he looked at me and said, "Even the nigger can have one." Everyone thought that was powerful funny, which I didn't understand, but I figured I probably was funny, standin' there, rags on my back, so lean my bones showed, a big Colt shoved in the front of my pants and a knife snugged down into the top of my boot. Reckon that was a funny sight, at that.

The rush went on for the bar, with me holdin' back, 'cause I ain't one for tippin' the jug, and besides, I been lookin' at Big Ugly in the eye. He had turned away from me, like he was goin' to the bar, when he exploded like a clap of thunder. He drawed his iron and whirled as fast as a body could have done. I never seen the like, then or since. But he ain't had to pull iron out and plug a rabbit on the second hop. No billy goat could've winked faster'n I hauled out my Colt. I just turned that Big Ugly into a scart rabbit in my hand, and I got him on the first hop, 'stead of the second. I got two shots into him and there he was, fallin' like a big tree. I knew where I hit him, and it was certain they'd be plantin' him tomorrow.

I slammed to the floor, rolled and was choosin' another target. I had that hammer eared back and my gun pointed straight at that crowd! Good thing I did, too, 'cause two in there had done got into action and was linin' up on me. I let off a shot at the tallest one and saw him grab his head right where I aimed, and fall back to the floor.

Then that other gun sounded and I felt like a hot log had been rolled across my shoulder. Things went dim for a little, then I heard another shot, but it missed 'cause I heard it thunk right by my ear on the floor. Then I planted that Basil, too. I got him on the first shot.

Now everyone is crawlin' out of corners and from under tables. I see guns pulled and most of 'em pointin' my way. They must have seen I was easy pickin's and figured it was safe. Only thing, them town folk must have took heart at Big Ugly goin' down so easy, along with them other two, 'cause all of a sudden there's shootin' goin' on in that room that would have turned a deaf man's head. There was Basils fallin' all over that room and

bodies divin' through the doors and windows. The barkeep, he cut loose right into the pack of 'em with a gun I ain't never heard of or seen. It was longer'n me, and had a barrel that looked like a stove pipe. I seen it hit square on one of them Basils and drove him clean through that wall. It was a mighty loud gun, too.

By that time all the shootin' was over there was nine Basils out of the runnin' as far as makin' any more Basils, plus two that nobody seemed to know. Likely, they was just friends. Wasn't but one townsman hurt, plus me, and I figured I was done for. That shirt of mine wasn't but a bloody rag when I left that Palace place the first time. Now, it was worse, especially since it was my blood on it, plus my pants was plumb soaked with blood. I felt myself gettin' sleepy, then I passed out.

Took me most of a month to heal, and when I got ready to leave that town turned out to wish me well. The blacksmith gave me two of them Basil horses, plus I got one of their guns and a saddle. Oh, I kept that slicker my friend had given me. It was kind of special. I took the clothes off one of them friends of the Basils, him bein' about my size. Patched the hole, and it looked real good.

The new mayor, he walks up to me as I was leavin' and sticks out his hand: "Kid," he said, "You might be a nigger, but you're white inside."

I just smiles at him and I made up my mind to find out what "nigger" means, first chance I get. I took off and never looked back. I was Texas bound. Figured I'd be what them folks called a "cowboy."

I never learned 'till after I got a job at the Slash Bar, down near the Brazos, what "nigger" meant. But I just never took that meaning to heart. Niggers is supposed to be low down and mean, not worth a corn husk. Me, I ain't no nigger, and there ain't a puncher there will call me one, now. Oh, I got me a couple of friends who do it now and then, for teasin', you know. But I ain't met no niggers out here. Way I see it, I planted the only niggers I ever met, way back there on my trail. They was all white, and six of 'em, but they was niggers, just the same.

VOYLE A. GLOVER



Eddie Zihert

GREETING THE DARKNESS

*Greetings darkness.
At last we are alone
To conspire against the forces of reality.
The awareness of my isolation is complete
And I am content
 within the folds of your sleeping shadows
It is safe to contemplate the nature of my rebellion.
I can justify
 to myself
 anything that I have done
and I need not offer explanations to a slumbering world.
It seems I am the only one immune to your spell of sleep
There is no one
 to misinterpret my intentions;
 or condemn by beliefs
and your silence leads me to assume that you are in approval
of me
 you must be my one true friend.
I thank you, darkness
 for consistently arriving every day.
I will take it as an omen
If you fail to appear one day,
 And hold myself personally responsible.*

DENNIS MOLONTKUS

BREATHE WITH ME

*Breathe with me
That you may know
The essence of my soul*

*Walk with me
That you may know
The measure of my stride*

*Reach with me
That you may know
The touch of fire*

or

Love me as I am!

LINDA S. NETHERY

WHY?

*We ask God's help
 when needed,
Yet thank Him not
 when heeded.*

thee and me

JIM THORLEY

DANTE VISITS THE CALUMET REGION

"and still the hand gropes to make sure,"

Purgatorio: XII, 130.

I.

*If you came again,
without doubt you would say, haven't
I climbed this Inferno before?*

*But here still the Lake ices over,
& steely tongues are still spewing
black curses towards heaven.*

(Again. . . ? without doubt you would say)

ADEODATO PIAZZA NICOLAI

DANTE VIENE ALLA CALUMET REGION

"per che la man ad accertar s'aiuta,"

I.

*Se tu di nuovo calasti,
senza dubbio diresti: non l'ho già
fatto l'Inferno una volta?*

*Ancora qua il Lago è ghiacciato,
& bocche di ferro sputano ancora
bestemmie di nero alla cappa del cielo.*

(E tu senza dubbio diresti, di nuovo. . .?)

ADEODATO PIAZZA NICOLAI

ANSWERS

*It's funny
how answers come
when you are least expecting them.
Like pieces to a puzzle
that fall into place
just as you are about to admit it is
unsolvable.*

*Somehow, you know
it's right, and you needn't roll it over in
your mind.
If it didn't belong—it wouldn't be
there.*

*Suddenly,
all the minor tragedies of life
blend perfectly
into an endless comedy.*

*At last!
You can sit back
undisturbed
and marvel at its
simplicity,*

*Wondering
why you ever doubted its existence.*

*After all
if there were no answers
there would be no questions to
begin with.*

DENNIS MOLONTKUS

INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURALIST

*once
a pipe welder
finished his corned beef lunch
in the employee canteen
and spat a peach stone
onto the canyoned, sooty
sidewalk
outside the eighty-four inch hot strip*

*Ten years later
the pipe welder's legacy—
as solid as the steel mill
before it
holds black fruit
under the rain
of granular, coke-plant
dust*

DIANNE KRESICH

IF THIS WERE OBSTETRICS

*If this were obstetrics
we'd all be talking
about wanting either a boy or girl
or how it didn't really matter
as long as it's a baby*

*If this were obstetrics
we'd talk about how many
we had, their ages
and what pretty babies they were*

*If this were obstetrics
we'd be proud mothers-to-be
and parade around elephant style*

*but as it is
we are mothers-not-to-be
silent
eyes cast to the floor
encompassed in our
own individual
shame
rejoicing
fear*

JERRILYN ROBINSON

GRANDFATHER SOL

*You provide us the warmest blanket,
That we might not be cold.
You bathe us in light,
That we may be clean.
You, the fearless provider,
Tending the crops that sustain us,
and asking no reward.
We,
a billion greedy grandchildren,
Suckling the breast of your favorite daughter,
Hungrily exploring her private areas,
Learning things we have no right to know,
A family of perverted scholars—ravishing
our mother to quench our own thirst to rule.
I wonder if you know
that some of us are ashamed,
or grateful.
And when you take shelter behind dark clouds,
I sometimes walk through your gentle tears so that I
may be closer to your grief,
And share with you, the sorrow that is brought by your
faithless children.*

DENNIS MOLONTKUS



Eddie Zihel

FOR MINNIE RIPPERTON

*I think of Minnie when I hear
birds trill
or see white blooming sprigs
that must smell sweet,
even in that picture;
when I see birds
fly free
in the depths of
winter,
I hear her silver
song.*

B. E. BALOG

SPRING

*Soldierly rows
Of crocus
Peep
From beneath hedgerows,
Color
The late snow.*

*Saffron strings
Of weeping willow
Turn
From winter grey
And hang
In a yellow sketched
Cloud.*

*Sprigs of forsythia
Full budded
Give
Pregnant hope
Of golden
Harvest.*

*Green shoots
Of tulip and daffodil
Pierce the earth
As green flows
Slowly
Across the lawn.
Spring.*

LINDA KNIGHT PRESTON

*A newly budded rose
is delicate
so is
a marriage relationship
delicate.*

*If crushed
a delicate rose
cannot
be repaired
nor
can a marriage of neglect
be newly budded.*

NATRONA WILSON

*Wife
Idealistic, innocent
Loving, giving, hoping
Disappointment, heartbreak, disillusionment, pain
Learning, emerging, healing
Realistic, capable
Ex-wife*

JOANNE DI NOVO

PARENTING

MADE IN THE U.S.A.

*Pizza pies, political lies,
Rock and roll, disco, soul,
Speedy cars, shady bars,
Made in the USA.*

*Drag races, plastic faces,
Vacant lots, hot spots,
Pinball machines, broken dreams,
Made in the USA.*

*Apple pie, FBI,
The Revolution, The Constitution,
The Senate, the House, Mickey Mouse,
Made in the USA.*

*Walt Disney, Elvis Presley,
Vegas and Reno, gambling casinos,
G-rated movies, x-rated groupies,
Made in the USA.*

*Civil rights, street fights,
Television, Select-A-Vision,
Capitol Hill, the birth control pill,
Made in the USA.*

*Mass production, price reduction,
All-pro sports, boxer shorts,
Presidents and residents,
Made in the USA,
Guaranteed and warranted,
Made in the USA.**

*I am the psychological parent
I am the one who counts underwear
fearing there is not enough
for another day
I shudder at my office desk
when school bells ring
fearing some inconsiderate motorist
may turn left on red
onto my scion
There is more that I fear
I fear carnivorous escalators
combustible house
voluptuous tornados
and botulism for dinner
I pack lunches
chocked full with vitamins
memorize symptoms for 16
assorted diseases
including crib death
although my baby is now seven
I can monitor their breathing
in my sleep
a tear
I can catch
before it falls
guilt overtakes me
when I've burnt the toast
or miscalculated the milk
I go into debt so they won't want
I entertain,
Look! I'm a clown
a magician
a puppet for you.*

JERRILYN ROBINSON

*Made in Japan

ONLY WHEN I REMEMBER

*Gray figures stalk my past
Searching for an opening to my thoughts.
They desire to make a home inside my head --
forever.*

Knowing that I am listening

*They speak louder,
louder.*

Until I stumble on a hurt felt long ago.

I want to ignore this memory tugging at my arm

Leading me back,

back,

back,

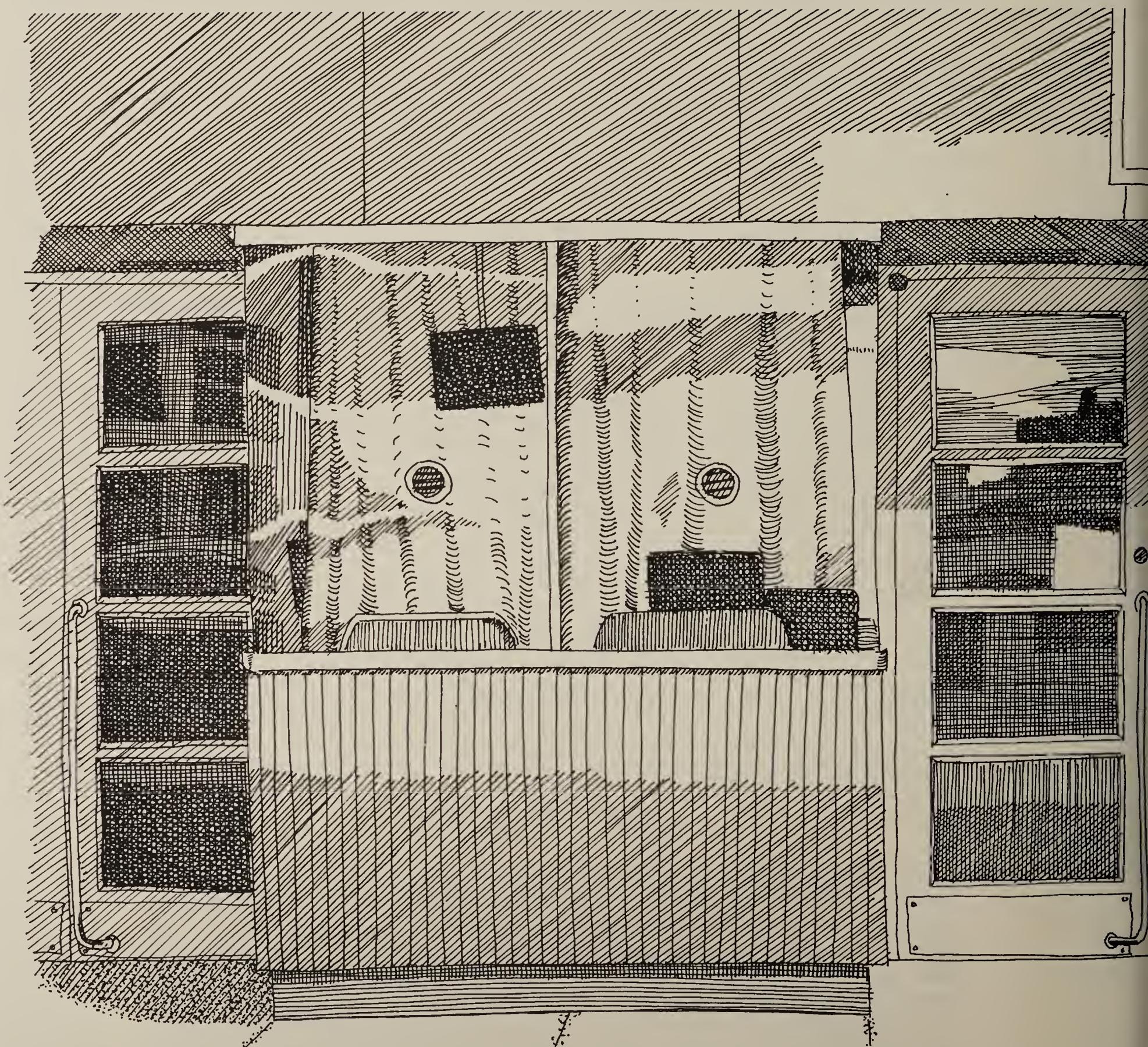
LOST FLICK

The woods are hushed and waiting with no sound anywhere save a lone quail crying in the cool pre-dawn mist above Runyon creek. Its monologue runs unbroken through the gray velvet depths, keeping me company during my vigil. From my canopy bed of soft, slightly damp earth and sagging willow branches, I listen to the bird and watch the thin milky moon droop sadly, almost imperceptibly downward. At last it presses the rounded tree tops and pauses, quivering.

It is the perfect instant. I click on the soft-glow lamp and spring through twisted clear-cut shadows to my easel. Deep greens and faint suggestions of black stare flatly at me from the canvas. Heart pounding, I fumble with my brush and tubes of paint. A single drop of white placed just so and my dream will be captured.

Off goes the light. I sit unmoved in darkness and peace. My brush never touches the painting. Understanding eludes me and I can only wonder, could Monet have added so delicate a fleck to the corner of a canvas?

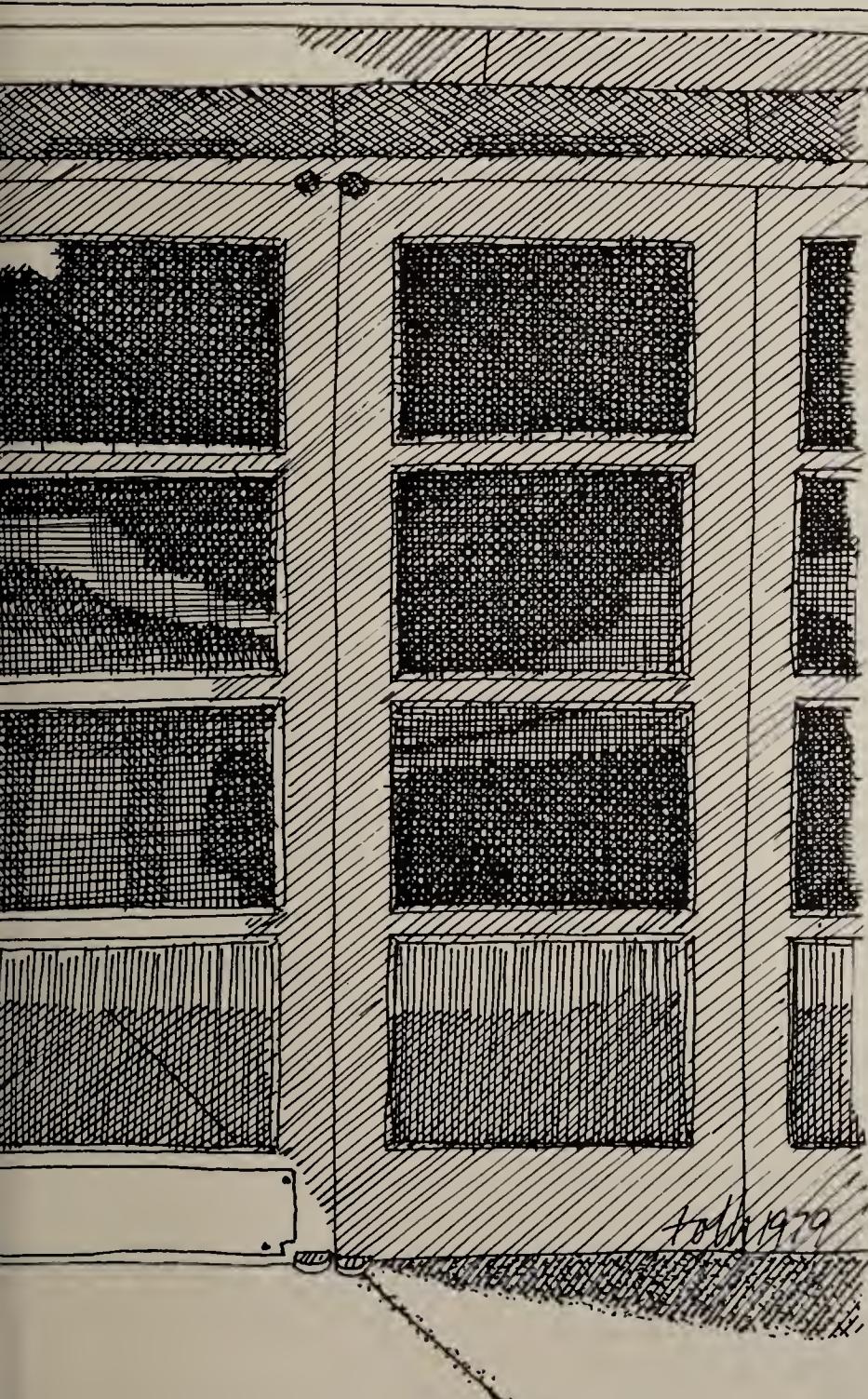
STEVE PARKMAN



SUMMER BREEZE

An evening breeze silently
brushed aside the curtains.
I felt his cool presence
on my warm cheeks.
Unlike the torrid, heated wind of the day,
that tried to smother my breath,
this timid lover caressed me gently,
hesitating,
lest his haste might frighten me.
Patient.
His cool lips kissed my face,
butterfly wings against my skin.
A distant roll of thunder teased him.
He became uneasy.
Abrupt.
Unsettled, he brusquely tousled my hair.
He circled the room with agitated urgency.
Outside, rain began falling.
I closed the window.
He was gone.

ELLEN LAWRENCE



Mark Toth

COMPLACENCY

As I read
it flitted into my view.
A piece of matter that couldn't be blinked away.
So bold it was,
daring to come this close.
A small, unimpressive specimen,
a common cabbage butterfly,
but its spirit held me captive.
I could read no longer.
I had become one with this fragile being
and flew his hapless course.
His delicate angel wings carried me.
We traveled from hollyhock
to petunia
to snapdragon
and back again.
We paused on the edge of the birdbath
only to be chased away by a sparrow.
We circled the blossoms again
and again.
Tiring of this endless,
repetitious,
mindless meandering,
I begged to return to my window.
He fluttered a moment
then leaving me, continued his eternal,
restless,
mysterious search.

ELLEN LAWRENCE

HIGH SCHOOL PROM

*In my high school
We wanted to dance.
It would be fun,
Good exercise, we said.*

*Old people in town
Shook their heads.*

*A minister
Called on the superintendent.*

*"Consider, alone,
The dance position."
He could scarcely speak.
"A man and woman,
Bodies touching. . ."
He had pictures
and statistics.*

*But, our superintendent
replied,
"Some girls won't get
An arm around them
If they never dance."*

*We had our prom,
We jitterbugged,
Sometimes danced close.
No long after,
The boys went off to war.*

MARY V. BROWN

*he sits
on the metal park bench
as ancient as the peeling paint
head bent
he comes everyday
to feed the hungry pigeons
gnarled hands scatter peanuts
and his smile becomes just
one more wrinkle
creasing his face*

*the little beggars
gather at his feet
to accept the love morsels*

*i walk by
half afraid of the sentimentality
as it creeps up my back*

*and often i think of him
and wonder what the birds would do
without him*

LORNA ERICKSON

/

Grandma S.

*Her bird-fingers
wind the yarn
under
around
over the needles
flitting, twitching
nest-building
Given life
the sweater
grows arms.*

DIANNE KRESICH

SET SAIL!

*The Nighthawk's moored in a silver lagoon,
Facing the open sea.*

*The tides can turn her round and round
But cannot set her free.*

*She chafes at her moorings,
Anxious to set sail.*

*What's on the open sea for her,
Fair weather or gale?*

*We lead a sad and lonely life,
Each of us adrift.*

*Sometimes we find a harbor safe
From life's appalling rift.*

*We could play it safe and stay there,
Free from wind and hail.*

*But then we'd never know, would we,
How it feels to sail!*

MICHELE BULL-PAYTON

THE BREAK OF MORN

*The rising sun tickles my eyes
as I peer eastward along the ocean road.*

*The crisp sea wind nibbles my face,
fondles my hair,
and floats lazily down the beach.*

*The drone of endlessly tumbling sea waves
drowns my ears,
masking the distant calls of gulls.*

*The sun's warmth hungrily laps up
remaining wisps of fog
still futilely hugging the hills.*

*And the morning erupts
like the egg breaking in my skillet.*

DEB JONAITIS



Krista Matthews

Children's Section

*Country
clean, fresh
fields, trees, crops
breathing easily, coughing constantly
smokestacks, exhaust pipes, catcrackers
polluted, smoggy
City*

ARMEN HOVANESSIAN

*Flame
Red, hot
Flaming, brightening, saddening
Who dropped the match in the forest?*

CHRIS FISSINGER

*Those beautiful Blues
The speedy Finbacks
Those singing Humpbacks
And even Bowheads.*

*They are all whales
They conquer the seas
Then dive to the depths
of oceans they rule*

*A Sperm spouts out air
From his one blowhole
Then he dives down deep
To fight giant squid.*

*They're free from harpoons
And old whalers
But still face dangers
Of man's pollution.*

We hold their destiny.

JEFF KOBE

*Tree
Tall, Wide
Growing, shading, producing
I put the syrup on my pancakes*

JOHN TOBIN

HAIKU

*The mountains stand high
Coldness spreads through the clear sky
And the clouds shiver.*

CASS CHRISTENSON

*The scene is peaceful,
all filled with the openness
Those glorious trees.*

CHRISTINE BOBECK

*Oceans waving free
Water whips against the rock
Rocks are soaking wet*

HOLLY HARLE

*The snowy white sheep
were like a soft white pillow
just fluffed by the wind*

KRIS JANSEN



Krista Matthews

BRIEFEST

*What do you call a gun that
has been in the sun all day?*

*Hot
Shot*

PAUL MAJCHROWICZ

*What the little girl said to her flower
“You grow
Too slow!”*

CAROLYN PAVICH

*Command given to Rudolph by Santa
“Stop here,
Deer!”*

BRIDGET YEKEL

*What the sun says when its ready to go down:
“Soon,
Moon.”*

JILL JASINSKI

*A thing I said when I had to write this poem,
“Rhyme
Time.”*

JIM AULTMAN

*The words used to describe Moby Dick:
Pale
Whale.*

JOHN TOBIN

*What a Chicagoan says during the winter:
“Oh no!
More snow!”*

BLUE

*My new, tight blue jeans
The sky on a clear, sunny day
The bluejay perched on my bedroom sill
The eyes of my dearest sister
The football jerseys of the Baltimore Colts
My feeling when my great uncle died*

ARMEN HOVANESSIAN

RED

*Red is a shiny, bright reindeer nose,
a big bunch of balloons, and ten cold toes.
Red is the color of apples that
shine.
Red is the color of my Valentine.
Anger is red and so is fire!
Red is the color of my old bike
tire.
Red is the color of a brand new
ball.
Red is roses and leaves in the fall.
Red is Santa on Christmas eve.
Red is the wagon that he might
leave.
Red is Red Barron who flies in the
air.
Red is the color of my sister's hair.
Now if you don't know a lot about red,
you haven't listened to the things I just said.*

KRISTI DUNN

BROWN?

*Brown are leaves, Brown is Fall.
Brown is a horse in his stall.
Brown is a mountain tall and fat,
Brown is a mud pie that went splat.
Brown is a fresh baked apple pie,
Brown is dirt in my eye.*

STEPHEN STUMPF

*In a dune buggy race,
It's like flying through space.
Way up in the sky,
You think you might die.
It's such a thrill,
Going up a sand hill.
Over the land,
Swooping into the sand.
You go down the hills speeding,
And you're still leading!
Your wheels are spinning,
And you're winning!
As you pass the line,
A thrilling feeling goes through your spine,
You've won the race!*

MICHELE DYBEL

*I get
Dirty and dusty
Underneath a shower of sand and my
Nose gets itchy
Everytime we go over a*

CATCH THE JOY

*Bump.
Underneath the blue sky I
Giggle and
Gurgle whenever we go up the
Yellow sand in a dune buggy.*

MARIA KYRIAKIDES

*the feeling of really being free, free, free!
up and down the dunes,
falling into an endless pit and
escaping unscathed,
exhilarating,
the oneness of you and your mobile crossing
the sleek and sometimes slippery sands,
forming tornadoes of sand as you twist and turn,
leaving your stomach behind,
letting your spirits run wild,
being the only living creature
as far as the eye can see,
letting the sand engulf you,
fighting your inner fears as you sail
across mountains that sink so suddenly,
floating across valleys of nothingness,
feeling the warm embrace of the sun, the crisp,
coolness of the wind, and the smoothness
of the ground beneath you,
feeling courageous, adventuresome as you dare
to trespass this area off limits to cautious souls,
you're totally alone as you*

JENNI KASPER

DOROTHY

*Dorothy (you know Dorothy)
went to Boola Boola land.
Dorothy with little Toto held
tightly in one hand.*

*The monsters all around here
were red and pink and blue.
Then she caught sight of
old witch "you know who".*

*That's right! No joke! It's
true! Oh yes!
Eye to eye with ugly witch
Miss Bess.*

*Hee! Hee! Bess cackled haughtily
as she looked all around her,
Dorothy was so stiff with fright
she had no wits about her!*

*The hungry, ugly, monsters
eyed her from all sides,
Dorothy smiled weakly and
swallowed down her pride.*

*Toto growled and tried to scare ol' Bessy—
he tried with all his might.
Witchy Bess just said, "Scuse the mess.
Had a party last night!"*

*Dorothy turned and ran as
fast as she could go,
Until she ran right into her
witchy evil foe!*

*"Thought you'd get away!" Bess laughed.
(Her monster joined in too.)
"Harry come and take this girl
and slice her into two!"*

*"On, no! Please! Leave me alone!"
She said her words in such a way,
Bessy changed her tone.*

*"Let her go and leave her be!"
The crone so kindly said.
The monsters said, "C'mon and we'll
chop off her head!"*

*"Do as I say!" the now decent
woman replied,
"My heart melted when she
sat down and cried."*

*Dorothy's home from Boola Boola
and safely tucked in bed,
But you just don't know when one more trip
just might pop into her head!*

NORA LOWRY

I used to be . . .

*I used to be a mean crocodile,
But now I'm a suitcase with a lot of style.*

PHIL MARTINI

*I used to be a water color
By a third grader.
But now I am a Van Gogh
Hanging in a museum.*

THOMAS SIPES

*I used to be a tree
So beautiful
But now I'm a chair
So comfy.*

JARED KOTZO

*I used to be a tidal wave,
But now I'm all washed up.*

SEAN GILL

*I used to be the apple of your eye
But now I'm just a measly piece of pie.*

AMY NELSON

*I used to be a grape,
worth nothing at all,
But now I'm a bottle of
"Paul Masson."*

SEAN GILL

*I used to think that school only lasted till
eighth grade, but now I know that it lasts
forever.*

PATRICK LE DUCA



Krista Matthews

SPRING POEM

Scent of life
Plants of every kind budding,
sprouting, blossoming
Running brooks
Inchoate, new-born mammals
entering the stream of life for
the first time.
Needing their mothers' warmth
Glorious wonder of Mother Nature.

WINTER POEM

Crisp, cool winds,
Endless drifts of snow leading you nowhere,
dark, shadowy evergreens outlined against
a pale, white blanket,
Fresh sparkly clean air which
brings you alive inside,
Silvery white snowflakes falling gracefully and
freely from the empty sky,
Snowmen with jet-black coal eyes
that watch everything that goes on,
They give you a warm smile and a
“how-do-you-do” as you pass,
Whirlwinds of white,
The almost lifeless season.

JENNI KASPER

SOUND

*Patting
Its
Tears on
The
Edge of the
Roof.*

*Plaintively
And
Tragically beats
The
Endless
Rain.*

*The sound
Inside a
Clock that
Keeps you awake*

GLEN ABRAHAMSON

*Bees live
Under branches of trees
Zipping by with
Zest!*

MARIA KYRIAKIDES

*My
Incredible
Chubby
Humorous
Ever
Loving
Little
Entertaining sister*

RAY HALUM

*Cardinals sit
Here on my window
Insisting on food while
Rapidly singing
Pretty songs*

LEANNE GAYDA

*By and by
Everyday and
Every evening
People get stuck in traffic*

JEANNE PUDLO

*Hiding quietly
In the tall weeds
Slithering slimily is a
Snake on a hunt.*

TIM ETTER

*Eerie Dreary Dark
Caves
Have
Open
Ends that rebound
Sound*

DAWN GIBBS

*Stubbornly,
Neither child will
Allow the other to have the
Pretzel.*

KAREN MARKOVICH

*Young frightened ladies
Eagerly
Left the smelly hay
Loft when they saw the mouse!*

DEBBIE DILLON

*Pretty pet
Excellent dog
Purposely
Pretending he's
Eight, but
Really 77*

RICKY DERNULC

*Springing off the
diving board, by the
Pool, I yelled for a
Lifeguard
As I
Suddenly
Hit the water in a
belly flop*

KAREN PFISTER

CASTAWAYS

A tiny pool
Of water
Left by the ocean tide
Where a sand crab burrows,
A minnow swims,
And a minuscule piece of seaweed
Floats silently
In its watery world.
Now the ocean comes back
to collect its
Castaways.

MELANIE HANSSON

Chicago
Foggy, Dirty
Building, growing, blowing
A good sightseeing place
The Windy City

PAUL WAISNORA

Poems
joyful, sorrowful
writing, expressing, thinking
They bring back your remembrances
Poems

MARY DOYLE

MASKED BANDIT

Black mask,
Striped Tail,
“Arrakun”,
the Indians call him,
Meaning
“Washing bear.”
Others call him,
“Pest.”
I call him,
“Cute.”

MELANIE HANSSON



Warren Skalski



Krista Matthews

Friend—the next best thing to myself

LISA PAVLOVICH

*A friend is the one flower growing
in a garden of weeds.*

DEANNE WACHEL

*A true friend is just
the opposite of a
snowman, friends don't
melt away.*

*Loneliness is . . . a big black hole
sunk deep into your stomach.*

CHRISTINE JOHNSON

*Loneliness is when your own dog
runs away and never comes back.*

TIM MATEJA

I wish I were . . .

*I wish I were a flower,
resting all winter and joyfully
poping out of a bud in spring.*

JUDY FLORCZAK

*Riding a horseless carriage
through an endless desert;
Defiant of the Laws of Gravity,
. . . one can only wonder why.*

DAN BUKSA

I AM I

*Don't try to catalog
Me.
One moment I'm
Sporty.
The next I'm
Subdued.
I'm a
Clown.
I'm a
Philosopher.
I'm a well-rounded
Square.
Don't limit me.
Because growing things
Need lots of room.*

WHILE BABYSITTING

*Is it my turn
You ask with eyes shining
And I feel like saying
Yes, Stevie, it's your turn
And it can be your turn
All night
If you want.*

*I can tell you need my
Time.
We counted pegs
And identified colors
For fifteen straight minutes.
It was as if you were hypnotized
With the attention you were getting.*

*When does disregard
Become neglect
And child abuse?*



